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CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

From the French of

HONORE DE BALZAC

1762
4036

WITH FOURTEEN CHOICE ILLUSTRATIONS

THE CHOICE SERIES No. 19.

By HARRY C. EDWARDS

ROBERT BONNER'S SONS
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CESARINE. *Frontispiece.*

CESAR BIROTTEAU

A Novel

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

HONORE DE BALZAC

ILLUSTRATED

BY

HARRY C. EDWARDS

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THE GREATNESS AND DECLINE OF CESAR BIROTTEAU.

CHAPTER I.

CÉSAR IN HIS GLORY.

IN Paris, upon winter nights, the din in the Rue St. Honoré is but for an instant suspended; the wagons from the country, on their way from market, take up and continue the murmur, just dying away, caused by the carriages returning from theatres and balls. In the very dead of this moment of repose, which occurs in the symphony of

Parisian tumult, at about one o'clock in the morning, the wife of César Birotteau, a retail perfumer doing business near the Place Vendôme, was suddenly awakened by a frightful dream. She saw herself double; she appeared before herself in rags, lifting with a dry and wrinkled hand the latch of her own shop door, thus being at the same time upon the threshold and in her chair behind the counter; she asked herself alms, and she heard herself speak both at the door and at the desk. She tried to grasp her husband, and putting her hand upon his place in the bed, found it cold. Her fear now became so intense that her neck stiffened to petrifaction; the sides of her throat stuck together, and her voice failed; she remained glued to her seat, her eyes staring and fixed, her hair standing on end, her ears filled with unusual sounds, her heart contracted, but still beating, and, in short, both perspiring and icy cold, in the middle of an alcove, the two folding doors of which were open.

Fear is a partially diseased feeling, which acts so violently upon the human mechanism that its faculties are suddenly strung to the highest pitch of their power, or reduced to the lowest possible degree of disorganization. Physiologists have long wondered at this phenomenon, which confounds their systems and overturns their conjectures, though it is nothing more, so to speak, than an internal lightning flash, but, like all electrical effects, capricious and irregular in its method. This explanation will be the common one when scientific men have recognized and acknowledged the immense part that electricity plays in the processes of the human mind.

Madame Birotteau now experienced several of these luminous throes, so to speak, caused by these terrible discharges of the will, scattered or concentrated by an

unknown mechanism. Thus, during a lapse of time short when measured by the watch, but incommensurable by the standard of her rapid impressions, the poor woman became possessed of the extraordinary power of emitting more ideas, of remembering more incidents, than, in the ordinary state of her faculties, she could have done in twenty-four hours. The startling details of this monologue may be summed up in a few words as absurd and contradictory as the monologue itself.

"There can be no possible reason for Birotteau's getting out of bed. Can he have eaten so much veal that he has made himself sick? But if he were unwell, he would have waked me. During the nineteen years that we have slept together in this bed, in this very house, never has the poor darling once left his place without letting me know. If he has slept out, it must be because he's at the station-house. Did he come to bed at all to-night? Why yes, idiot that I am, he did."

With these words she cast her eyes upon her husband's place in the bed, and there saw his night-cap, which still preserved the conical form of his head.

"Can he be dead?" she resumed. "Has he killed himself? Why should he? During these two years that he has been deputy-mayor, he has been all topsy turvy. To put *him* in the public service! ridiculous, upon my word. His business is prosperous, for he has given me a shawl. But perhaps it's in a bad way. No, he would have told me. But who ever knew what a man's got in the bank? or a woman, either? There's no harm in it. Didn't we make sales to-day to the tune of five thousand francs? Besides, a deputy-mayor could not commit suicide; he knows it's against the law. Where can he be?"

She could not turn her head, nor stretch out her hand to pull a bell, though she might have thus aroused a cook, three clerks, and a shop-boy. Still under the influence of the nightmare, which continued though she was awake, she entirely forgot her daughter who was sleeping quietly in a chamber adjoining her own, the door of which opened at the foot of her bed. At last she cried "Birotteau!" but received no answer. She thought she had pronounced the name, but had only uttered it mentally.

"Can he have a mistress? Impossible, he is too stupid, and besides, he loves me too much. Didn't he say to Madame Roguin that he had never been unfaithful, even in thought? He is integrity itself descended to earth. If any one deserves paradise, he is the man. What sins has he to avow to his confessor? For a royalist that he is, without knowing why, though, he does not make much show of his religion. He goes stealthily to mass, poor man, at eight in the morning, as if he was going to some improper place. He fears God, for God's own sake; but he thinks very little of hell. How could he be unfaithful? He sticks so close to my petticoat that he actually bores me. He loves me more than he does his own peepers, and he'd put his eyes out to please me. Never, during nineteen years, has he spoken a hard word, that is, to me. His own daughter is second to me. But Césarine is there. (Césarine! Césarine!) Birotteau has never had a thought that he has not told me of. He had good reason, when he used to come a-wooing to the Sailor-Boy, to declare that I never would know him till I tried him, and now he's gone! Stupefying mystery!"

She turned her head with effort, and cast a furtive glance across the chamber, full, at this moment, of those picturesque effects of light and shade, peculiar to the

night, inexpressible in words, and seemingly the exclusive domain of the pencil and the brush. What language could enable us to describe the grotesque zigzags produced by the lengthened shadows, the fantastic shapes assumed by curtains swollen by the wind, the play of the uncertain taper-light in the folds of the Turkey red, the fiery reflection vomited, so to speak, from a gilded arm sustaining the drapery—the flashing centre of which resembled the eye of a thief—the apparition of a gown on its knees, in short, the thousand caprices which exalt and terrify the imagination, especially at moments when its only tendency is to receive painful impressions and to intensify them.

Madame Birotteau imagined she perceived a brilliant light in the room adjoining her own, and straightway thought of fire ; but on noticing a red bandanna handkerchief, which had the appearance of a pool of blood, the idea of robbers seized her to the exclusion of all others, especially when she sought to discern, in the situation of the furniture, the traces of a struggle. At the remembrance of the sum of money which was in the till, a more worthy apprehension extinguished the chills and fever of the nightmare ; she got up and rushed, all excited as she was, and in her night habiliments into the middle of the chamber, where she expected to find her husband contending manfully with murderers and burglars.

" Birotteau ! Birotteau !" she cried in tones full of anguish. She found the perfumer in the middle of the adjoining room, a yardstick in his hand, with which he was measuring the air, but so ill wrapped in his green cotton dressing-gown with chocolate-colored spots, that his legs were red with the cold, though he, in his excitement, did not feel it. When César turned round to say

to his wife, "Well, Constance, what do you want," his manner, like that of men absorbed in mathematical calculations, was so absurdly foolish, that Madame Birotteau laughed outright.

"Bless me, César," she exclaimed, "how funny you do look! Why did you leave me alone without letting me know it? I was nearly dead with fear, and I did not know what to think. What are you doing here, exposed to the four winds? You'll catch a cold that'll make you bark. Don't you hear, Birotteau?"

"I do, wife, and here I am," replied the perfumer, returning to the bed-room.

"Come and warm yourself, and tell me what folly has got you now," said Madame Birotteau, raking the ashes open, and rekindling the fire. "I'm freezing, goose that I was to get up in my night-gown. But I really thought they were murdering you."

The perfumer placed his candle upon the mantel-piece, wrapped himself up in his dressing-gown, and went mechanically to get his wife her flannel petticoat.

"Here, love, put this on," he said. "22 by 18," he added, resuming his monologue, "we can have a superb salon."

"I say, Birotteau, are you going mad? Are you dreaming?"

"No, wife, I am calculating."

"You might as well wait for daylight, to perpetrate such follies," cried she, tying on her petticoat under her night-gown, to go and open the door of the chamber where her daughter slept.

"Césarine is asleep," she said; "she will not hear us. Go on, Birotteau, speak. What is the matter?"

"We can give the ball."

"Give a ball! We! Upon my word, you *are* dreaming, my good man."

"I am not dreaming, beautiful gazelle," he replied. "Listen. A man must always act in accordance with the position which he occupies. The government has advanced me. I belong to the government; we are therefore called upon to study its spirit and to forward its designs by developing them. The Duke de Richelieu has just brought about the evacuation of French territory. According to M. de la Billardière, the public officers who represent the city of Paris should make it their duty, each in the circle of his influence, to celebrate the liberation of the land. Let us manifest a sincere patriotism which will shame that of those plotting intriguers, the self-styled liberals. Do you think I do not love my country? I mean to show the liberals, my enemies, that loving the king is the same as loving France!"

"So you think that you have enemies, my poor Birotteau?"

"Yes, wife, we have enemies. Half our friends in the neighborhood are enemies. They all of them say: 'Birotteau's in luck. Birotteau has risen from nothing, and yet he's deputy-mayor, and everything he does succeeds.' They'll find out once more how true that is. Be the first to learn, wife, that I am a Knight of the Legion of Honor; the king signed the decree yesterday."

"Oh, then," said Madame Birotteau, quite excited, "we must give the ball, dear. But what have you done to deserve the cross?"

"When M. de la Billardière told me the news yesterday," said Birotteau, with embarrassment, "I asked myself the same question. What are my claims, said I.

But as I was coming home, I succeeded in discovering the reasons of the government, and in approving its course. In the first place, I am a royalist, and was wounded at St. Roch in Vendémiaire. Is it nothing to have borne arms at that time for the good cause? Then, there are no few merchants who say that I discharged my consular functions to the satisfaction of all. At last, I have become deputy, and the king awards four crosses to the municipal body of the city of Paris. Upon examination of the persons among the deputies who might be honored with the decoration, the prefect put my name the first upon the list. Besides, the king must know me; thanks to old Ragon, my predecessor, I supply him with the only powder he is willing to use; we alone possess the recipe for making the late queen's powder, dear august victim that she was! The mayor zealously supported me. So that if the king gives me the cross without my asking him, it seems to me that I cannot refuse it without insulting him. Did I ever ask to be deputy?

"So, wife, as we have the wind astern, as your uncle Pillerault says, when he is in a frolicsome humor, I am decided to place everything in our house upon a footing with our lofty fortunes. If I can be any body, I will run my chance of becoming what kind Heaven wants me to become, sub-prefect, for instance, if such is my destiny. You commit a grave error, wife, in supposing that a citizen has paid his debt to his country in having retailed perfumery for twenty years to people who come to buy it. If the state claims the help of our light and information, we are as much bound to give it as we are to pay the window tax, the furniture tax, and the rest. Do you desire to remain forever behind your counter? You have lived there long enough already, Heaven be

praised! The ball shall be our fête. Farewell to retailing—for you, that is.

"I shall burn our sign of THE QUEEN OF ROSES; I'll efface the words *César Birotteau, Perfumer, successor to Ragon,* and will simply put *Perfumery* in their place, in big golden letters. I'll place the office, the till, and a neat retiring-room for you on the first floor. I'll convert the back shop, the dining-room and the kitchen, as they now stand, into a store. I'll hire the first story of the adjoining house, into which I'll cut a door through the wall. I'll reverse the stairway, so as to go on the same level from one house to the other. Thus we will have a large suite of apartments furnished like a peacock's tail. I shall refit your chamber, arrange you a boudoir somewhere, and give a nice room to Césarine. The shop-girl that you engage, our first clerk, and your chambermaid (yes, madame, you shall have one,) shall live upon the second story. Upon the third will be the kitchen, the cook and the porters. The fourth shall consist of our warehouse of bottles, glass and porcelain. And our workwomen shall occupy the garret. The passers-by shall no longer see us pasting labels, sewing bags, assorting phials, and corking flacons. Well enough for the Rue St. Denis, but in the Rue St. Honoré, pooh! not the thing at all. Our shop must be as grand as a parlor. Are we the only perfumers who have risen to honors? Are there not makers of vinegar and dealers in mustard, who are officers in the National Guard, and who are highly considered at the palace? Let us follow their example; let us extend our business, and at the same time make our way into good society."

"Now, do you know, Birotteau, what I've been thinking of? You look very much like a man making him-

self trouble where none exists. Remember my advice to you when the idea was broached of appointing you mayor: 'Your tranquillity before everything!' You are no more made, I said, for public service than my arm is for the wing of a windmill. Greatness would be your ruin. You did not listen to me, and now our ruin is come. To play a part in politics, a man must have money. Have we any? What! you want to burn your sign which cost you six hundred francs, and abandon the Queen of Roses, your true and only glory! Leave ambition to others. If you put your hand into the fire, you draw it out burned, don't you? Well, politics burns, now-a-days. We have one hundred thousand francs invested outside of our business, our manufactory, and our stock, have we not? If you want to increase your fortune, do now as you did in 1793; government securities are at 72 francs; invest it in government securities. You will have ten thousand francs income, and the investment will in no respect injure our business. Take advantage of this improvement to marry our daughter; sell out our establishment, and let us retire to the country. What! for fifteen years, you have talked of nothing but buying the Trésorières, that charming little property near Chinon, where there are springs, meadows, woods, vines, two farms under culture, which bring in three thousand francs a year, and where we should both be glad to live, and which we can still purchase for sixty thousand francs, and you are now crazy to be something or somebody in the government.

"Remember what we are—retail perfumers. If you had been told sixteen years ago, before you had invented the CONCENTRATED SULTANA PASTE, and the CARMINATIVE WATER, 'You shall have the money to buy the Trésorières,' wouldn't you have gone wild with joy? Well,

you are now able to buy this estate, which you desired so ardently that you could speak of nothing else, and yet you talk of spending in folly means obtained by the sweat of our brows,—I have a right to say ours, for I have always had my seat behind the counter, like a poor dog in his corner. Is it not better to have a room kept for you at your daughter's house—she having become the wife of a notary of Paris—and live eight months of the year at Chinon, than to stay here and lose money hand over fist? Wait for a rise in government stocks, give eight thousand a year to your daughter, keep two thousand for ourselves; the sale of our stock and good-will will enable us to buy the Trésorières. There, in the country, with our expensive city furniture, we can live like princes, while to make a figure here, we need a million at least."

"That's where I have you, wife," returned César. "I am not fool enough—though you think me a big one—to act without reflection. Listen. Alexander Crottat is exactly what we want for a son-in-law; and he will succeed Roguin in his notaryship. But do you think he will be content with a dowry of one hundred thousand francs—on the supposition that we portion Césarine with all our floating capital, which is my desire? I would willingly eat dry bread for the rest of my days, to see her as happy as a queen—in short, a Paris notary's wife. Now, one hundred thousand francs, or even the capital producing eight thousand francs a year, are nothing towards purchasing the good will of Roguin's office. Little Xandrot, as we call him, believes us, as everybody else does, to be much richer than we are. If his father—a heavy landed proprietor, and as close as a vice—does not sell one hundred thousand francs worth of land, Xandrot won't be a notary, for Roguin's office is worth

four or five hundred thousand francs, and Crottat must absolutely pay one half in cash. Césarine must have a dowry of two hundred thousand francs, and we must retire from business, solid citizens of Paris, worth fifteen thousand a year. If I make that as clear as daylight, your potato-trap will shut up, won't it?"

"Oh, if you've got the mines of Peru—"

"Well, I have, my dear. Yes," he said, taking his wife by the waist, and tapping her gently, under the influence of feelings which animated all his features, "I did not mean to mention this affair before it was well cut and dried; but I shall close it to-morrow, perhaps. Here it is: Roguin has offered me a share in a speculation which seems so certain that he goes in with Ragon, your uncle Pillerault, and two of his clients. We are going to buy, in the neighborhood of the Madeleine, land which we can get now for one quarter of the value it will have reached, according to Roguin's calculation, three years hence. At that period, all lease and ground rents will have expired, and we can manage the land as we please. We six enter into the scheme in porportions already agreed upon. I subscribe three hundred thousand francs, and represent three-eights of the capital. If any one of us needs money, Roguin will obtain it upon his portion, by a mortgage.

"In order to hold the affair in my own hands, and know for myself how matters are going, I have stipulated that the half common between me, Pillerault, and old Ragon, shall be in my name. Roguin's will be in the name of one Charles Claparon, my co-proprietor, who is, like me, to convey their shares back to his associates. The deeds of purchase are made by agreement to sell under private seal, until we come into full possession of the land. Roguin will say which contracts are

to be carried into effect, for he is not sure that we shall be able to dispense with entering them at the registry office, and thus throw the registry tax upon those to whom we sell in lots ; but all this would be too long to explain. The land once paid for, we may fold our arms, and in three years from now we shall be worth a round million. Césarine will be twenty years old, our stock and good-will will be sold, and we will sail modestly along towards greatness as Heaven may kindly decree."

"Yes, but where are you going to get your three hundred thousand francs purchase money?" asked Madame Birotteau.

"You don't understand business, at all, my love. I will take first, the hundred thousand francs that are waiting for investment in Roguin's hands ; next, I will borrow forty thousand francs more upon the buildings and gardens of our factory in the Faubourg du Temple ; then we have twenty thousand in negotiable paper : in all one hundred and sixty thousand francs. There remain but one hundred and forty thousand more, for which I will sign notes to the order of Charles Claparon, banker ; he will give me the proceeds, the discount off. There are the three hundred thousand francs paid ; for he who owes on time, owes nothing, as they say. When the notes fall due, we'll meet them with our profits. If we can't meet them, Roguin will advance me money, at five per cent., secured by a mortgage upon my share of the land. But it will be quite unnecessary to borrow, for I have discovered an essence to make the hair grow, a Comageneous Oil ! Livingston has put up an hydraulic press in the factory to make oil from nuts, which, under heavy pressure, will give out all the oil in them. I expect to make one hundred thousand francs the first

year. I am thinking of a hand-bill beginning thus: "Down with Wigs!" the effect of which will be prodigious. You have not observed my sleepless nights! For three months the success of Macassar Oil has disturbed my slumbers. Macassar must be crushed!"

"So, then, these are the fine projects you've been turning over in your cocoa-nut the past two months, without saying a word to me! I have just seen myself begging at my own door, may Heaven be praised for the warning! We shall soon have nothing left but our eyes to weep with. Never shall you do it, César, while I am alive! There are manœuvres and underhand intrigues beneath all this, which you don't see; you are too honest and upright to suspect rascality in others. Why do these people come and offer you millions in this way! You strip yourself of your property, you involve yourself beyond your means; if your oil doesn't take, if money isn't to be had, and if the lands don't sell, how are you to meet these notes? With the nut shells? In order to get up in society, you want to take down your name, and you talk of suppressing the sign of the Queen of Roses, and yet here you are composing ridiculous bills and prospectuses which will exhibit César Birotteau stuck on every post and pasted on every wall."

"Oh, you don't understand. I'll have a branch under the name of Popinot, in some building near the Rue des Lombards, where I'll establish little Anselme. In this way I'll pay my debt of gratitude towards Monsieur and Madame Ragon, in setting their nephew up in business. These poor people have seemed to me under the weather for some time past."

"My idea is that these men want your money."

"What men, Constance? Certainly not your uncle Pillerault, who is so fond of us and who dines with us

every Sunday? Not that dear old Ragon, our predecessor, who has been so honest for forty years, and with whom we play at Boston? Not Roguin, a notary of Paris, fifty-seven years old, and who has been a notary for twenty-five years? A notary of Paris would be the very cream of honest men, if honest men were not all cream alike. In case of need, my associates will aid me. Where is the plot, then? I must tell you what I think of you, for as I'm a man, Constance, I've got it on my conscience. You are as suspicious as a lynx, my sweet! As soon as we had made two sous, you took every purchaser for a thief. And now I have to go on my knees to beg you to let yourself make money! For a woman of Paris, you are not very ambitious. Without your perpetual apprehensions, no one would have been happier than I! If I had listened to you, I should never have made either my CONCENTRATED SULTANA PASTE or my CARMINATIVE WATER. The shop has given us a living, it is true, but these two inventions and our assortment of soap have given us over one hundred and sixty thousand francs clear! Without my genius, for I really have a talent for perfumery, we should be miserable little retailers, and should be forever dragging the devil by the tail to make the two ends meet; I shouldn't be one of the notables who elect the judges of the tribunal of commerce, and I should have been neither judge nor deputy. I'll tell you what I should be! A mere shop keeper like old daddy Ragon—I say it without offense, for I respect shopkeeping, as the best part of all we've got has come of it! After having sold perfumery for forty years, we should possess, like him, barely three thousand francs a year; and as the necessaries of life have nearly doubled in price, we should hardly have the means of living. (I am more and more concerned for

those old people every day ; I must look into the matter, and I'll have an explanation from Popinot to-morrow.) If I had followed your advice—you who are so uneasy in your happiness, and who are always asking yourself whether you will have to-morrow what you have to-day, I should have no influence, I should not have the cross of the Legion of Honor, and shouldn't be in the way to become a politician. Oh, it's no use shaking your head ; if our affair comes to a point, I may be chosen member for Paris. My name is not César for nothing ; everything I do succeeds. It is really inconceivable that while everybody out of doors acknowledges my ability, at home, the only person whom I wish to please and for whose happiness I am ready to sweat blood and water, is precisely she who considers me an idiot."

These sentences, tho' interrupted by eloquent flashes of silence and fired as if they were bullets—after the manner of all who assume an attitude of recrimination—expressed so profound and unalterable an attachment, that Madame Birotteau was internally much moved ; but, like all women, she profited by the affection she inspired to advance the cause she had espoused.

"Well, Birotteau," she said, "let me be happy in my own way, if you love me. Neither you nor I have received any education ; we can neither speak nor even say 'How d'ye do' after the manner of people of fashion; how can you expect us to succeed in government offices? I should be happy at the Trésorières ; I like animals and birds and could easily pass my life in taking care of chickens, and being a farmer's wife generally. Let us sell the shop, marry Césarine, and let your hair oil go. We will come and spend the winter in Paris with our son-in-law ; we shall be well off and happy, for nothing either in politics or trade can change our manner of

life. Why should we wish to crush other people? Isn't our present fortune enough? When you are a millionaire, will you dine twice? Will you need another wife than me? Look at my uncle Pillerault; he is wisely contented with his modest property and spends his life in doing good. Does he want fine furniture? Speaking of furniture, I'm sure you have ordered mine; for I saw Braschon here, and he didn't come to buy soap."

"Well, then, ducky, the furniture *is* ordered, and our repairs and alterations are to be begun to-morrow, superintended by an architect whom M. de la Billardière has recommended to me."

"Great Heaven, have pity on us!" cried Madame Birotteau.

"You are unreasonable," returned her husband. "Think of going to bury yourself at Chinon, young and handsome as you are, and only thirty-seven years old! Thank God, I'm only thirty-nine myself. Chance offers me a career of splendor, I accept the offer. By cautious conduct, I may establish an honorable house in the bourgeoisie of Paris, and found, as was the custom not long ago, the Birotteaus, just as there are the Kellers, Jules Desmarets, Roguins, Cochins, Guillaumes Popinots, Matifats who are conspicuous or have been conspicuous in their quarters of the city. If, indeed, the affair was not as sure as golden ingots—"

"Sure?"

"Yes, sure. I have been figuring it out these two months. Without letting anyone know it, I have been posting myself in building matters, at the office of the corporation, with architects and contractors. Monsieur Grindot, the young architect who is to overhaul our apartments, is desperate at having no money with which to take part in our speculation."

"Oh, he thinks there is building to do, and he urges you on, to finger your money."

"Will men like Pillerault, Charles Claparon, and Roguin allow their money to be fingered? The profit is as sure as that of the CONCENTRATED SULTANA."

"But, my good husband, what need has Roguin to speculate at all, if his office is paid for and his fortune is made? I see him pass now and then, looking as anxious as a minister of state, and glaring from under his eyebrows in a way I don't like; he's got some secret trouble. His face has become during the last five years that of an old debauchee. How do you know he won't kick up when he's got his hand on your money? Such things have happened. Do we know him intimately? For all his being our friend for fifteen years, I wouldn't put my hand in the fire for him. He does not live with his wife. When I am dressing myself, I look through the blinds, and I see him coming home on foot, early in the morning. Where does he come from? Nobody knows. He seems to me like a man who has his own private establishment, spending money for himself, while his wife does as much for herself. Is that the life of a notary? If they make fifty thousand francs a year, and spend sixty, in twenty years they'll run through their fortune, and will find themselves as naked as the infant St. John; but as they have been accustomed to shine, they'll prey without pity on their friends; now charity, well understood, begins at home. He is intimate with that little wretch of a du Tillet, our former clerk, and I see nothing good in this friendship. If he doesn't see through du Tillet, he is blind; and if he does see through him, why does he make so much of him? You will say, perhaps, that his wife is in love with du Tillet; very well; I expect nothing good of a

man when his wife does not respect him. Besides, are the present holders of these lands stupid, that they offer for five francs what is worth one hundred? If you were to meet a child who did not know the value of a louis, wouldn't you tell him? Your speculation looks to me like a swindle, though I mean no offence."

"Dear me, how queer women sometimes are, and how they mix ideas up together! If Roguin had no share in the enterprise, you would say, 'Look here, César, you have undertaken an affair without Roguin. It can't be a safe one.' In this present business he appears as a guarantee, and yet you say—"

"No, it's a Monsieur Claparon."

"Well, a notary cannot appear by name in a speculation."

"Then why does he do a thing forbidden by the law? Answer, you who are so strong upon the law."

"Don't interrupt. Roguin joins us, and you say the plan is good for nothing. Is it reasonable? Then you say, 'He is doing what the law forbids.' He will appear in his own proper person, if necessary. And now you say, 'He's rich.' Couldn't the same thing be said of me? How would you like to have Ragon and Pillerault come and ask me, 'Why do you go into this affair, you who are as rich as a hog-merchant?'"

"Traders are not in the same position as notaries," said Madame Birotteau.

"In short, my conscience is tranquil," returned César. "Those who sell, sell from necessity. We no more rob them, than we rob those of whom we buy stocks at 75. We buy land to-day, and we buy it at the price it brings to-day; two years hence it will be different with both land and stocks. Be very sure, Constance-Barbe-Joséphine Pillerault, that you will never catch César

Birotteau committing an action which is either against the law, or at variance with the dictates of integrity, morality, or honor. To think of a man established in business for eighteen years being suspected of dishonesty in his own family !"

"Come, César, don't be angry. The woman who has lived with you all that time knows your excellent heart. After all, you are the master. It is you who have made our fortune ; it is yours, you can spend it. Though we are reduced to the lowest depths of misery, neither Césarine nor I will ever utter a reproach. But listen : when you invented your Sultana Paste and your Carminative Water, what did you risk ? Some five or six thousand francs. To-day you are staking your whole fortune upon a single turn of a card, and you are not doing it alone, either ; you have associates who may prove sharper than you. Give your ball, refurnish your rooms, spend ten thousand francs, it will do no good, but it will not ruin us. As to your Madeleine affair, I object to it formally. You are a perfumer ; stay a perfumer, and don't be a speculator in land. We women have an instinct which never deceives us. I have warned you, now do as you like. You have been a judge in the Tribunal of Commerce ; you understand the laws ; you have skilfully guided your bark, and I'll follow you, César. But I shall tremble till I see our fortune firmly established, and Césarine well married. God grant that my dream be not a prophecy !"

This submission vexed Birotteau, who employed the innocent ruse to which he usually resorted upon similar occasions.

"I haven't yet positively promised, Constance ; but it's just as if I had."

"Oh, César, it's all over, let's say no more about it.

Honor takes precedence of fortune. Come, go back to bed, there's no more wood. Besides, it will be more comfortable talking in bed, if it amuses you. Oh! what a frightful dream! To see one's self! oh, it's hideous! Césarine and I must give ourselves up to prayers and devotions for the success of your land."

"Of course the aid of God can do no harm," said Birotteau, seriously. "But the essence of nuts is likewise a power, wife. I made this discovery as I did formerly that of the Concentrated Sultana, by chance; the first, while opening a book; this last, while looking at the engraving of Hero and Leander. Pretty idea, isn't it, a woman pouring oil upon the head of her lover? The safest speculations are those which are founded upon vanity, self-love, and the desire of appearing to advantage. These sentiments never perish."

"Alas, I see they don't!"

"At a certain age, men will do anything on earth to get their hair back, if they have lost it. For some time past, the barbers have told me that they sell not only Macassar, but every sort of preparation that dyes hair, as well as makes it grow. Since the peace, men have more time to spend with women, who can't abide bald heads. Ha! ha! my ducky dear! So, the demand for these articles is explained by the political state of the country. A composition which would really keep the hair in health would sell like bread, especially as my essence will doubtless be approved by the Academy of Sciences. My good friend Vauquelin will assist me again, perhaps. I'll go and propose it to him tomorrow, and give him at the same time the engraving which I have succeeded in finding, after a two years' search, in Germany. He is engaged, as luck will have it, in an analysis of the human hair. Chiffreville, his

partner in manufacturing chemicals, told me so. If my discovery agrees with his, my essence will be bought by both sexes. I repeat that the idea is a fortune. Luckily, little Popinot has the finest hair I ever saw. With a shop-girl whose hair drags upon the ground, and who could assert, if the thing is possible without offending God or man, that the Comageneous Oil (for I have decided to call it an oil) had something to do with it, every grey head in the country would pounce upon it like poverty upon the world. How about your ball now, my deary? I don't wish anybody harm, but I should like to meet that du Tillet, who plays the big-bug with his fortune, and who always avoids me on 'Change. He knows that I'm acquainted with a performance of his which does him no honor. Perhaps I have treated him too well. Isn't it strange, wife, that we are always punished for our good actions—here below, I mean, of course! I've acted like a father to him; you don't know all that I have done for him."

"Don't speak of it; it gives me goose-flesh all over. If you knew what he wanted to do for you, you would not have kept the secret of the theft of the three thousand francs, for I have guessed the way in which it was managed. If you had taken him to the station-house, perhaps you would have done society a service."

"What did he want to do for me?"

"Oh, nothing. If you were in a listening mood to-night, I would give you a good piece of advice, Birotteau,—just to let du Tillet alone."

"Wouldn't it be thought strange that I should exclude from my house a clerk whose security I was for the twenty thousand francs with which he commenced business? Let us do good for the sake of doing good. Besides, perhaps du Tillet has reformed."

"We shall be in a perfect uproar here."

"What do you mean by a perfect uproar? Everything will be straight as a sheet of ruled music paper. Have you forgotten what I said about the staircase, and my hiring a suite of rooms in the adjoining house—all of which is arranged with Cayron, the umbrella dealer. We are to go together to-morrow, to see Molineux, his landlord, for I have as much business on my hands as a minister of state—"

"Oh, you have turned my head with your schemes," said Constance. "I'm all mixed up. Besides, Birotteau, I'm half asleep."

"Good-day," returned the husband. "I say good-day, because it's morning. Ah, the good soul's off. Never mind, you shall have money to roll in, or my name is not César."

A few moments later, Constance and César were peacefully snoring.

The ideas suggested to the reader by the friendly altercation of the two principal characters of this sketch will be confirmed by a rapid glance at their previous life. While describing their habits, we can explain by what strange chance César Birotteau was both perfumer and deputy-mayor, ex-officer in the National Guard and Knight of the Legion of Honor. As we throw light upon the depths of his character and upon the springs of his greatness, the reader will understand how the commercial accidents over which strong heads easily triumph, become irreparable catastrophes for feeble minds. Events are never absolute, their results depend altogether upon the individuals affected by them; misfortune is a stepping-stone for the great, an expiation for the pious, a mine for the shrewd, a precipice for the weak.

A peasant of the environs of Chinon, named Jacques Birotteau, married the chambermaid of a lady whose vines he tended; he had three sons; his wife died in giving birth to the last, and the poor man survived her but a short time. The lady was fond of her chambermaid; she caused her eldest son, named François, to be educated with her own children, and placed him in a seminary. Ordained a priest, François Birotteau concealed himself during the Revolution and led the wandering life of the refractory priests, who were hunted like wild beasts, and, at the very least, guillotined. At the time when our story begins he was vicar of the Cathedral of Tours, and had never left that city but once, in order to go and see his brother at Paris. The bustle and tumult of the city so bewildered the good priest that he dared not leave his room; he called gigs "half-carriages," and was amazed at everything. After remaining a week he went home to Tours, determined never to return to the capital.

The peasant's second son, Jean Birotteau, drafted by the conscription, rapidly rose to the rank of captain during the earlier engagements of the Revolution. At the battle of la Trebia, Macdonald called for volunteers to carry a battery by assault. Captain Jean Birotteau advanced with his company and was killed. The destiny of the Birotteaus doubtless required that they should be oppressed by men or by events wherever they should plant their standard.

The last son is the hero of this sketch. When, at the age of fourteen years, he could read, write and cipher, he left his village and went on foot to Paris, to seek his fortune, with one louis in his pocket. The recommendation of an apothecary of Tours obtained him a place as shop-boy with M. and Madame Ragon, retail per-

fumers. César possessed at this time a pair of hob-nailed shoes, a pair of pantaloons, blue stockings, an embroidered waistcoat, a peasant's coat, three stout linen shirts, and a staff. Though his hair was cut like that of chorister children, he had the solid build peculiar to the inhabitants of la Touraine; though, like his countrymen, he sometimes abandoned himself to idleness, his desire to make his fortune was an ample compensation; though he wanted both native wit and education, he inherited an instinctive recitude and sentiments of delicacy from his mother, who, in the idiom of la Touraine, had a "heart of gold." César was boarded and lodged and earned six francs a month. He slept on a miserable pallet, in the garret, near the cook; the clerks, who taught him to pack boxes, to run of errands and to sweep the shop and the street before the door, made merry at his expense while inuring him to his work, in accordance with the custom in shops, where practical jokes are considered the principal element in education; M. and Madame Ragon spoke to him as if he were a dog. No one noticed the apprentice's fatigue, though in the evening, his feet, bruised by the pavements, pained him dreadfully, and his shoulders seemed almost broken. This rude application of the maxim, "Every one for himself," the gospel of every capital, gave César reason to consider life in Paris a hard one. At night, he wept as he thought of la Touraine where the peasant works at his ease, where the mason lays his stone and takes his own time, and where leisure and labor are discreetly mingled; but he went to sleep without thinking of running away, for he had more errands for the following morning, and he obeyed his instructions with the instinct of a watch-dog. When, by

chance, he complained, the head clerk smiled in a jovial way and said :

" Everything is not rose-colored even at the Queen of Roses, and larks don't fall here cooked ; you must run after them first, catch them afterwards, and finally have something to dress them with."

The cook, a fat girl from Picardy, took the best pieces herself and only spoke to César to complain of M. and Madame Ragon, who gave her no chance to feather her nest. Towards the end of the first month, being obliged to stay at home one Sunday, she entered into conversation with César. Ursule, tidied up in honor of the day, looked quite charming to the poor shop-boy, who, unless chance aided him, was destined to go to pieces upon the first hidden reef he should meet with in his career. Like all who are without protection, he fell in love with the first woman who looked kindly upon him. The cook took César under her wing, and a secret romance ensued, which the clerks pitilessly ridiculed. Two years afterwards, the cook fortunately abandoned César for a young runaway from her village, who had hidden himself at Paris, a Picard of twenty years, the owner of a few acres of land, and who allowed Ursule to marry him.

During these two years, the cook had fed César well, and had explained to him several mysteries of Paris life, observed from her own point of view, and, through jealousy, had inculcated a profund aversion for certain improper places, the dangers of which did not seem altogether unknown to her. In 1792, the feet of the deserted César had become accustomed to the pavement, his shoulders to his burden, and his mind to what he called the shams and quackeries of Paris. So when Ursule abandoned him, he was speedily consoled, for

she had realized none of his instinctive ideas on the subject of the sentiments. She was coarse and churlish, wheedling and filching, selfish and intemperate, and shocked Birotteau's simplicity without giving him, in return, the slightest pleasing perspective. Sometimes, César meditated with grief upon his connection, by ties the strongest for unsophisticated natures, with a creature with whom he had no sympathy. At the time when he became master of his own heart, he had grown tall and reached the age of sixteen. His wits having been developed by Ursule, and the pleasantries of the clerks, he devoted himself to the study of trade with a demeanor in which intelligence was concealed beneath simplicity ; he observed the customers, asked at odd moments explanations in regard to the merchandise, and fixed in his memory the names and places of the different articles. At length he understood the goods, their marks and prices better than the new-comers, and from that time Monsieur and Madame Ragon became accustomed to employ him.

The day when the terrible requisition of the Year II cleared citizen Ragon's house of assistants, César Birotteau, promoted to the place of second clerk, profited by this circumstance to obtain a salary of fifty francs a month, and took his seat at the table of the Ragons with unspeakable joy. The second clerk of the Queen of Roses, already rich in the possession of six hundred francs, had a chamber, where, in long coveted articles of furniture, he could lock up his accumulated effects. On holidays, this mild and modest peasant, dressed like the young people of the period, with whom it was the fashion to affect rough manners, wore an air that rendered him at least their equal, and he thus overleaped the barriers that in other times his situation

would have placed between the bourgeoisie and him. Toward the close of this year, he was made cashier on account of his integrity. The imposing lady Ragon attended to the needs of his wardrobe, and she and her husband became gradually intimate with him.

In Vendémiaire, 1794, César, who had two thousand francs in gold, exchanged them for six thousand francs in paper; purchased state stocks at thirty francs in the hundred, paid for them the very day when the depreciation at the exchange reached the lowest point in the scale, and locked up his certificate with indescribable happiness. From this day he watched the movement of the funds and of business with a secret anxiety, that made his heart beat at the recital of the reverses and successes which marked this period of French history. Monsieur Ragon, perfumer to Her Majesty, Queen Marie Antoinette, entrusted César Birotteau, at these critical moments, with the knowledge of his attachment for the fallen tyrants. This confidence was one of the momentous circumstances of César's life. The conversations at evening, when the shop was closed, the street silent, and the accounts made up, made a fanatic of the Tourainer who, in becoming a royalist, was but obeying his innate feelings. The recital of the virtuous acts of Louis XVI, the anecdotes with which the tradesman and his wife exalted the merits of the queen, warmed César's imagination. The terrible lot of these two crowned heads, cut off but a few paces from the store, revolted his sensitive heart, and filled him with hatred for a system of government so ready to shed innocent blood. Commercial interest showed him that prices fixed by decree, that political storms, which are always unfavorable to business, must be the death of trade. Besides, as a true perfumer, he hated a revolution that introduced

a new style of hair-dressing, and drove powder out of fashion. The tranquility secured by absolute power being alone able to give vitality to money, he became a fanatic royalist. When Monsieur Ragon saw that he was favorably disposed, he appointed him first clerk, and initiated him into the secrets of the Queen of Roses, some of whose customers were the most active and devoted emissaries of the Bourbons, and where the correspondence between the fugitives and Paris was carried on. Borne away by the warmth of youth, excited by his relations with the Georges, the Billardières, the Montaurans, the Bauvans, the Longuys, the Mandas, the Berniers, the du Guénics and the Fontaines, César threw himself into the conspiracy leveled by the united Royalists and terrorists on the 13th Vendémiaire against the expiring Convention.

César had the honor of contending against Napoleon on the steps of St. Roch, and was wounded at the outset of the affair. Every one knows the result of this attempt. While the aid-de-camp of Barras emerged from his obscurity, Birotteau was saved by his. Some of his friends bore the bellicose first clerk to the Queen of Roses, where he remained concealed in the garret, his wounds being dressed by Madame Ragon, and he himself luckily forgotten. César Birotteau had had but a single flash of military courage. During the month of his convalescence, he made many solid reflections upon the ridiculous alliance of politics and perfumery. If he remained a royalist, he resolved to be simply and purely a royalist perfumer, without ever again compromising himself, and gave himself body and soul to his business.

On the 18th Brumaire, Monsieur and Madame Ragon, despairing of the royal cause, decided to abandon perfumery, and to live like honest bourgeois, without med-

dling further with politics. In order to realize the value of their stock, they deemed it necessary to find a man of more probity than ambition, of plain good sense rather than capacity. Ragon, therefore, proposed the matter to his first clerk. Birotteau, possessing, at twenty years of age, an income of a thousand francs from the public funds, hesitated. It was his ambition to retire to Chinon when he had secured an income of fifteen hundred francs, and when the first Consul had consolidated the public debt while consolidating himself at the Tuileries. Why risk his honest and simple independence in the chances of trade? He had never thought to accumulate so large a fortune, and he owed it to hazards upon which none but the young ever venture. His fancy then was to marry a woman as rich as himself in Touraine, in order to be able to purchase and cultivate the Trésorières, a small estate, which, from his youth up, he had coveted, which he dreamed of increasing, and from which he could easily derive an income of three thousand francs, and lead a life of happy obscurity. He was about to refuse, when love all of a sudden changed his resolution by increasing ten-fold the figure of his ambition.

Since his betrayal by Ursule, César had remained virtuous, as much through fear of the dangers incurred at Paris, in love, as by his constant occupations. When the passions are without aliment, they are changed into needs; marriage then becomes, for people of the middle class, a fixed idea; for this is the only means they have of winning and appropriating a woman. This was the case with César Birotteau. Everything depended upon the first clerk at the Queen of Roses; he had not a moment to spare for pleasure. In such a life the needs are still more imperious; so that his meeting with a beautiful girl, to whom a libertine clerk would have

given scarcely a thought, naturally produced the greatest effect upon the virtuous César.

One fine day in June, on entering the island of Saint-Louis by the Marie bridge, he saw a young girl standing in the door of a shop situated at the corner of the Quai d'Anjou. Constance Pillerault was the head shop-girl of a fancy store called the Sailor-Boy, the first of those stores which have since been established at Paris, with a greater or less number of painted signs, floating banners, show-cases of gracefully suspended shawls, cravats built up like card houses, and a thousand other commercial attractions, fixed prices, scrolls, placards, optical illusions and effects carried to such a degree of perfection that shop-fronts have become commercial poems. The low price of all the so-called fancy articles that were sold at the Sailor-Boy gave it a popularity unheard of in a quarter of Paris so unfavorable to fashion and trade. This shop-girl was then noted for her beauty, as the *belle limonadière* of the café des Mille-Colonnes and many other poor creatures, have been noted since, and toward whom more noses, young and old, have been pointed, at the windows of milliners, etc., than there are paving stones in the streets of Paris. The head clerk of the Queen of Roses, living between St. Roch and the Rue de la Sourdière, exclusively occupied with perfumery, had no suspicion of the existence of the Sailor-Boy ; for the small trades of Paris are quite unknown to each other.

César was so intensely smitten with the beauty of Constance that he rushed into the Sailor-Boy for the purpose of purchasing half a dozen linen shirts, the price of which he discussed a long time, having many a piece of linen unrolled, like an English woman in the humor of shopping. The shop-girl deigned to pay César some

attention, perceiving by certain signs known to all women that he had come for the sake of the merchant rather than for that of the merchandise. He gave her his name and address, but she became very indifferent to the admiration of her customer after his purchase. The poor clerk had had no difficulty in winning the favors of Ursule, and had remained perfectly unsophisticated ever since. Love now made him sillier still, and he did not dare to utter a word, and moreover was too much dazzled to remark the indifference that followed the smile of this syren sales-woman.

During a whole week, he went every evening to stand sentry before the Sailor-Boy begging a look as a dog begs a bone at the kitchen door, careless of the mockeries indulged in by the clerks and shop-girls, humbly getting out of the way of purchasers and passers-by, and deeply attentive to the petty revolutions of the shop. Some days afterwards he again entered the paradise where his angel was, less for the purpose of purchasing some handkerchiefs than of communicating to her a brilliant idea.

"If you want any perfumery, miss, I shall be happy to furnish you with it," he said, paying her for the handkerchiefs.

Constance Pillerault was in the daily receipt of brilliant propositions, in which, however, the subject of marriage was never alluded to ; and, although her heart was as pure as her forehead was white, it was not until after six months of manœuvering, of marching and countermarching, wherein César manifested his tireless love, that she deigned to accept his attentions, though still unwilling to decide ; a precaution dictated by the infinite number of her admirers — wholesale wine-merchants, rich coffee-house-keepers and others, who regarded her

with languishing eyes. The lover was aided by the guardian of Constance, Monsieur Claude-Joseph Pillerault, then an ironmonger on the Quai de la Ferraille, whom he had discovered while abandoning himself to that secret espionage which marks true love. The rapidity of this narrative compels us to pass over in silence the joys of Parisian love when that love is innocent, and to say nothing of the prodigalities peculiar to clerks—presents of early melons, sumptuous dinners at Vénua's followed by the theatre, and holiday drives to the country.

While César was not a handsome young man, there was nothing in his looks of a character to prevent his being an object of love. His life in Paris, and his confinement in a gloomy shop, had finally extinguished the peasant tint of his complexion. His thick, dark hair, his huge Norman shoulders and chest, his strong limbs, his simple and honest look, all contributed to prepossess people in his favor. Uncle Pillerault, whose duty it was to protect the happiness of his brother's daughter, had made inquiries about César, and now sanctioned his intentions. In 1800, in the beautiful month of May, Mademoiselle Pillerault consented to espouse César Birotteau, who fainted with joy the moment when, under a linden tree, at Sceaux, Constance-Barbe-Joséphine accepted him for her husband.

"My child," said Monsieur Pillerault, "you will get a good husband. He has a warm heart and honorable feelings; he is as frank as an osier, and virtuous as a wax cherub,—in short, the king of good fellows."

Constance unhesitatingly relinquished the brilliant prospects of which, like all shop-girls, she had sometimes dreamed; she desired to be an honest wife and a good mother, and took that course in life which is in ac-

cordance with the religious notions of the middle class. This path, moreover, suited her ideas much better than the dangerous vanities that seduce the fancy of so many young Parisiennes. Constance, with her narrow intellect, might be regarded as the type of the small housekeeper, whose labor is never without an admixture of fretfulness, who refuses at the outset what she most desires, and is vexed when taken at her word, whose restless activity seeks employment both in the kitchen and at the ledger, in the gravest affairs of life as well as in the minutest cares of the wardrobe, who loves best when she scolds, conceives no ideas but the simplest —the small change of the mind—reasons upon everything, fears everything, calculates everything, and always thinks of the future. Her cold yet candid beauty, her touching look, her freshness, prevented Birotteau from thinking of certain defects; defects, however, counterbalanced by that delicate probity natural to women, by her excessive love of order, by her ardor for work, and a positive genius for effecting sales. Constance was then eighteen years of age, and possessed eleven thousand francs. César, whose love had inspired him with the most excessive ambition, purchased the stock of the Queen of Roses, and removed it to a beautiful building near the Place Vendôme. Only twenty-one years of age, married to a beautiful woman whom he adored, possessor of an establishment which was three-quarters paid for, César was in duty bound to regard, and he did regard, the future as bright, especially when he remembered how far he had already advanced. Roguin, the notary of the Ragons, who drew up the marriage contract, gave the new perfumer wise counsel in advising him not to complete the payment for the stock with the dowry of his wife.

"Keep, my good fellow," he said to him, "the means wherewith to engage in promising speculations."

Birotteau regarded the notary with admiration, got in the habit of consulting him, and made him his friend. Like Ragon and Pillerault, he had so much faith in the notariat, that he abandoned himself to Roguin without entertaining a suspicion. Thanks to his counsel, César, with the eleven thousand francs of Constance for commencing business, would not have exchanged his prospects for those of the first Consul, however brilliant Napoleon's prospects might seem to be. Birotteau had no domestics except a cook; he lived in the entre-sol* over his shop, a sort of close, narrow room, tolerably furnished by an upholsterer, and wherein the newly-married pair began a perpetual honey-moon. Madame César produced a marvellous effect behind the counter. Her famous beauty had an enormous influence on the sales; "the beautiful Madame Birotteau" was all the rage among the elegants of the empire.

Though César was accused of royalism, the world rendered justice to his probity; though several neighboring tradesmen envied him his good fortune, he passed as being worthy of it. The shot he had received on the steps of Saint-Roch gave him the reputation of a man in the secrets of politics and of a man of courage, although he had no courage in his heart, and not a political idea in his head. Upon these grounds, the honest people of his ward made him captain in the National Guard, but he was rejected by Napoleon, who, according to Birotteau, owed him a grudge on account

* An *entre-sol* is a low story between the ground floor and the first story of a house. So that in a house containing an entre-sol, the first story is up two pair of stairs.

of their meeting in Vendémiaire. César thus had a coating of the cheap varnish of persecution, and that made him interesting in the eyes of opponents, and gave him a certain importance.

What the lot of this household was, so invariably happy as far as sentiment was concerned, and only agitated by commercial anxiety, may be briefly told.

During the first year César Birotteau instructed his wife in the art of retailing perfumery, for which she showed a remarkable aptitude; she seemed to have been created and brought into the world on purpose to glove customers. At the close of the year, the inventory alarmed the ambitious perfumer; all expenses being deducted, he would scarcely net in twenty years the modest sum of one hundred thousand francs, at which figure he had fixed the limits of his fortune. He then resolved to arrive at the end desired more rapidly; and determined to add manufacturing to retailing. Against the advice of his wife, he hired a building and a few lots in the Faubourg du Temple, and there had a sign put up in large letters, thus: CÉSAR BIROTTEAU'S FACTORY. He enticed from Grasse a workman with whom he commenced on joint account the manufacture of soaps, essences and Cologne water. His partnership with this workman continued but six months and ended with losses, the whole of which he sustained. Not yet discouraged, Birotteau resolved to obtain a result at whatever price, for the sole purpose of not being scolded by his wife, to whom he afterwards confessed that in this period of despair his head boiled like a porridge-pot, and that several times, had it not been for his religious feelings, he should have thrown himself into the Seine.

Saddened by his fruitless experiments, he was one day idling along the Boulevards on his way home to

dinner—for the Parisian idler is as often a man in despair as a man of leisure; among some books at six sous apiece, displayed in a box on the ground, his eyes were attracted by the following title, yellow with dust: *Abdeker, or the Art of Preserving Beauty.* He took up this pretended Arabian book—a sort of romance written by a physician of the last century—and fell upon a passage treating of perfumes. Leaning against a tree on the Boulevard for the purpose of running over the pages, his eye caught a note wherein the author explained the nature of the derm and the epiderm, and demonstrated that such and such a paste or such and such a soap often produced an effect contrary to what was expected; the paste and soap giving tone to skin that needed to be relaxed, or relaxing skin that required a tonic.

Birotteau purchased this book, in which he saw a fortune. Nevertheless, not very confident in his own knowledge, he went to the celebrated chemist, Vauquelin, whom he quite naively asked for the means of compounding a double cosmetic that should produce effects adapted to the different natures of the human skin. Truly learned men, those men so really great that they never obtain during their life-time the renown which severe and unknown labors deserve, are almost always ready to render service and to smile upon the poor in spirit. Vauquelin therefore helped the perfumer, allowed him to call himself the inventor of a paste for whitening the hands, the composition of which he indicated. Birotteau call edthis cosmetic CONCENTRATED SULTANA PASTE. In order to complete the work, he applied the formula of the paste for the hands to a water for the complexion, which he called CARMINATIVE WATER. He imitated in his own line of business the system of the

Sailor-Boy ; he was the first perfumer to display that luxury of hand-bills, advertisements, and other means of publicity perhaps unjustly denominated charlatanism.

The Sultana Paste and the Carminative Water were ushered into the world of gallantry and trade by colored hand-bills, at the head of which were these words : *Approved by the Institute!* This formula, employed for the first time, had a magical effect. Not only France, but the continent, was emblazoned with hand-bills, red, yellow, and blue, by the sovereign of the Queen of Roses, who kept, furnished and manufactured, at moderate prices, whatever pertained to his trade. At a period when nothing was talked of but the East, it was certainly an inspiration to call a cosmetic SULTANA PASTE, thus divining the magic which these words would work in a country where every man strives to be a sultan, as well as every woman to be a sultana ; and it was an inspiration that might have struck an ordinary man as well as a man of intellect ; but the public always judges by results, and Birotteau obtained farther credit as a superior man, commercially speaking, by drawing up a prospectus, the ridiculous phraseology of which was itself an element of success. In France, people only laugh at things and men in which they are interested, and no one is interested in what does not succeed. Although stupidity had been no part of Birotteau's design, yet people credited him with the talent of knowing how to play the stupid apropos. A copy of this prospectus has been found, though not without trouble, in the house of Popinot & Co., Rue des Lombards. This curious document belongs to that class which, in a higher department of literature, historians call "Piéces Justificatives." Here it is :

CÉSAR BIROTTEAU'S

—CONCENTRATED SULTANA PASTE—

AND

—CARMINATIVE WATER.—

A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY!

Approved by the French Institute.

"For a long time a paste for the hands, and a water for the face, affording a result superior to that obtained by Eau de Cologne in the labor of the toilet, has been generally desired by the two sexes in Europe. After having devoted long meditations to the study of the derm and epiderm in both sexes, who, the one as well as the other, rightly attach the greatest value to softness, suppleness, brilliancy, velvetiness of the skin, Monsieur Birotteau, a perfumer favorably known in the capital and abroad, has discovered a Paste and a Water which were justly called, on their first appearance, 'miraculous,' by the beaux and belles of Paris. In fact, this Paste and this Water possess astonishing properties; they act upon the skin, without prematurely wrinkling it—an effect inevitable in the drugs inconsiderately employed hitherto, and invented by the ignorant and mercenary. This discovery is based upon the distinction of temperaments, which may be divided into two great classes, indicated by the color of the Paste and the Water, which are red for the derm and epiderm of persons of a lymphatic constitution, and white for those of persons enjoying a sanguine temperament.

"This paste is called *Sultana Paste*, because the discovery was originally made for the seraglio by an Arabian physician. It has been approved by the Institute on the report of our illustrious chemist Vauquelin, as well as the water, which is established upon the principles that have determined the composition of the Paste.

"This precious Paste, which exhales the sweetest perfumes, dispels the most rebellious freckles, whitens the most obstinate epiderm, and drives away the sweat of the hands—an affliction of which women complain as well as men.

"The *Carminative Water* removes the pimples which at certain times unexpectedly break out upon ladies, and disarrange their plans for balls; it refreshes and revivifies the color by opening or closing the pores according to the exigencies of temperament; it is already so well known for arresting the ravages of time that many ladies have, through gratitude, called it THE FRIEND OF BEAUTY.

"Cologne water is purely and simply an ordinary perfume without special efficacy, whilst the *Concentrated Sultana Paste* and the *Carminative Water* are two highly active compositions, with a motive power acting without danger upon the internal qualities and assisting them; their essentially balsamic odor and exhilarating essence rejoice the heart and brain wonderfully; they charm the ideas, and even awaken them; they are as astonishing for their merit as for their simplicity; in short, they form a new attraction offered to women, and an additional means of fascination that men may possess themselves of.

"The daily use of the Water dissipates the irritation caused by the heat of shaving; it equally preserves the lips from chaps, and keeps them red; it naturally eradicates freckles by constant use, and in the end restores tone to the flesh. These effects always indicate in man

a perfect equilibrium between the humors, a state of things which has a tendency to deliver persons subject to megrim from that terrible malady. In short, the *Carminative Water*, which may be employed by ladies in every part of their toilet, prevents cutaneous affections, whilst it causes no injury to the transpiration of the tissues, and communicates to them an abiding velvet.

"Address, post paid, Monsieur César Birotteau, successor of Ragon, ex-perfumer to Queen Marie Antoinette, at the Queen of Roses, Rue Saint Honoré, Paris, near the Place Vendôme.

"The price of a roll of Paste is three francs, and that of the bottle is six francs.

"Monsieur Cesar Birotteau warns the public, in order to shun counterfeits, that the Paste is enveloped in a paper bearing his signature, and that the bottles have a seal blown in the glass."

The success was due, though César was far from suspecting it, to Constance, who advised him to send cases of the Carminative Water and the Sultana Paste to all the perfumers of France and the neighboring countries, offering them a discount of thirty per cent. if they would take the two articles by the gross. The Paste and the Water were, in reality, better than other similar cosmetics, and attracted the ignorant by the distinction established between the temperaments; each of the five hundred perfumers of France, allured by the profit offered, annually bought more than three hundred gross of the Paste and Water, a consumption that brought César small gains, indeed, for a single article, but in the aggregate, enormous profits. César was thus able to purchase the dilapidated buildings and the lots of the Faubourg du Temple; he built large factories there, and

decorated the Queen of Roses magnificently ; his household affairs underwent various little ameliorations, and his wife was no longer in trepidation about the future.

In 1810, Madame César, foreseeing a rise in rents, urged her husband to take a lease of the whole house in which they occupied the shop and the entre-sol, and to move up to the first floor. A happy circumstance decided Constance to shut her eyes to the foolish expense that Birotteau was incurring for her sake in the new apartments. The perfumer had just been elected Judge in the Tribunal of Commerce. His probity, his well-known sense of honor, and the consideration he enjoyed, procured him this dignity ; he was henceforth classed among the notable tradesmen of Paris. In order to increase his knowledge, he rose at five o'clock in the morning, to read the records of jurisprudence and such books as treated of mercantile litigation. His sense of justice, his rectitude, his aim to do right—essential qualities in the settlement of difficulties submitted to consular decision—rendered him one of the most esteemed judges. His defects equally contributed to his reputation. Feeling his inferiority, César willingly made his own views subordinate to those of his colleagues, who were flattered by being thus earnestly listened to ; some sought the silent approbation of a man regarded as profound, in his quality of listener ; others, charmed by his modesty and mildness, spoke in his praise. Those amenable to the court extolled his benevolence and his conciliatory spirit ; he was often chosen arbiter, and his good sense as often suggested decisions equal to those of a Cadi. During his tenure of office, he managed to invent a language well crammed with commonplaces, and studded with axioms and calculations rendered in rounded phrases, which, glibly uttered,

sounded to the ears of superficial persons like eloquence. He thus pleased that large majority of minds of average talent, perpetually condemned to toil and to narrow views. César lost so much time in the court that his wife constrained him henceforth to decline so costly an honor.

Towards 1813, thanks to its constant union, and after having jogged along in life after the ordinary fashion, the commencement of an era of prosperity that nothing seemed likely to interrupt, dawned upon the family. Monsieur and Madame Ragon, their predecessors, their uncle Pillerault, Roguin the notary, the Matifats, druggists of the Rue des Lombards, furnishers to the Queen of Roses, Joseph Lebas, a draper, and successor of the Guillaumes at the Cat and Battledore, one of the lights of the Rue Saint-Denis, Judge Popinot, brother of Madame Ragon, Chiffreville, of the house of Proiltez & Chiffreville, Monsieur and Madame Cochin, employees in the Treasury and silent partners of the Matifats, the abbé Loraux, confessor and director of the pious people of this coterie, and some other persons, constituted the circle of their friends. In spite of the royalist sentiments of Birotteau, public opinion was then in his favor ; he was considered very rich, although he did not yet possess more than a hundred thousand francs outside of his business. The regularity of his affairs, his exactness, his habit of owing nothing, of never raising money on his own note, but, on the contrary, of taking good paper from those whom he might accommodate, in payment, and his willingness to oblige, deservedly gave him high credit. He had, indeed, really gained a great deal of money ; but his buildings and the expense of his factories had absorbed much of it. Then his house cost him nearly twenty thousand francs a year. Lastly, the education of Césarine, an only

daughter, idolized by Constance as well as by himself, necessitated considerable expenditure. Neither the husband nor the wife regarded money in affording pleasure to their daughter, with whom they had never been willing to part. Imagine the joy of the poor parvenu peasant, when he heard his charming Césarine practising upon her piano one of Steibelt's sonatas, or singing a ballad; when he saw her writing the French language correctly; when he admired her reading Racine, whose beauties she explained, designing a landscape, or making a sepia-sketch. What happiness for him to live again in a flower so beautiful, so pure, that had not left the maternal stem, an angel, in short, whose budding graces, whose earliest development, he had eagerly watched; an only daughter, incapable of despising her father or ridiculing his want of education, so truly was she a young lady!

When César came to Paris, he could read, write and cipher; his education stopped there, his laborious life had hindered him from acquiring any ideas and knowledge foreign to the business of perfumery. Constantly mingling with people who were indifferent to science and letters, whose education did not go beyond specialities; having no time to devote to elevating studies, the perfumer became a practical man. He was forced to adopt the language, errors, opinions of the Parisian bourgeois—the class who admire Molière, Voltaire and Rousseau on faith, who purchase their works without reading them; who maintain that it is proper to say *ormoire*, because ladies lock up in those articles of furniture their *or* (gold) and their dresses which formerly were almost always made of *moire*, and that *armoire* is a corruption.

Potier, Talma, Mademoiselle Mars, were, the bour-

geois believes, millionaires ten times over, and did not live like other human beings ; the great tragedian ate raw flesh ; Mademoiselle Mars sometimes made a fricassee of pearls, in imitation of a celebrated Egyptian actress. The Emperor had leather pockets in his waistcoats to enable him to take snuff by the handful, and rode at full gallop up the stairs of the orangery at Versailles. Authors and artists died in the hospital in consequence of their oddities ; they were, besides, all atheists, whom it behooved people not to admit into their houses. Joseph Lebas cited, with a shudder, the history of his sister-in-law Augustine's marriage with the painter Sommervieux. Astronomers lived on spiders. These luminous specimens of their knowledge of the French language, of dramatic art, politics, literature and science, indicate the scope of their intellects. A poet, who passes along the Rue des Lombards, and inhales the pervailing perfumes, may dream of Asia there. Breathing the odor of vetyver in a green-house, he may behold the almées of the East. The splendors of cochineal remind him of the poems, the religion, the castes of the Brahmins. Coming in contact with unwrought ivory, he mounts, in imagination, upon the back of an elephant, and there, in a muslin pavilion, makes love like the king of Lahore. But the shop-keeper is ignorant whence come the articles in which he deals and where they grow. Birotteau knew nothing whatever of natural history or chemistry. In regarding Vauquelin as a great man, he considered him as an exception ; he resembled the retired grocer who thus shrewdly summed up a discussion on the way in which tea is brought to France : "Tea comes only in two ways, *by caravan* or *by Havre.*" According to Birotteau, aloes and opium were to be found only in the Rue des Lombards. The pretended

rose-water of Constantinople was made, like Cologne water, at Paris. These names of places were shams, invented to please the French, who cannot endure the productions of their own country. A French merchant was bound to call his discovery English in order to make it popular, as in England a druggist attributes his to France. Nevertheless, César could not be quite a dunce and a blockhead; integrity and benevolence gave respectability to the acts of his life, for a good deed obliterates any amount of ignorance. His constant success gave him assurance. At Paris, assurance is accepted for the power of which it is the sign.

Having thoroughly learned the character of César during the first three years of their married life, his wife was in a constant fever of anxiety; she represented, in this union, the part of sagacity and foresight, doubt hesitation, fear; as César represented that of audacity, ambition, action, and the extraordinary success of fatality. In spite of appearances, the tradesman was timid whilst his wife possessed real patience and courage. Thus, a narrow-minded and ordinary man, without education, without ideas, without knowledge, without decided character, who, on general principles, could not have succeeded in the most uncertain market in the world, came, by his discreet conduct, by his sentiment of justice, by his truly Christian goodness of heart, by his love for the only woman whom he had ever possessed, to be regarded as a remarkable man, as one courageous and full of resolution. The public saw the results only. His associates, with the exception of Pillerault and Judge Popinot, saw César but superficially, and could not form an opinion of him. Besides, the twenty or thirty friends who associated with each other were constantly uttering the same stupidities, re-

peating the same common-places, and all regarded each other as superior beings in their own walks of life. The women vied with each other in dinners and dress ; each one of them had said all she knew when she had said a word of contempt for her husband. Madame Birotteau alone had the good sense to treat hers with honor and respect in public ; she saw in him a man who, in spite of his secret incapacity, had acquired their fortune, and in whose consideration she participated. She sometimes asked herself, however, what the world could be, if all men of pretended superiority resembled her husband. Such conduct contributed not a little to sustain the respectful esteem awarded to a tradesman, in a country where women are so prone to bring their husbands into disrespect and to complain of them in public.

The early portion of the year 1814, so fatal to imperial France, was signalized at Birotteau's by two events, not very remarkable in any other household, but of a nature to make an impression upon simple-hearted people like César and his wife, who, as they looked back over the past, discovered none but pleasing emotions. They had taken a young man at twenty-two as head-clerk. His name was Ferdinand du Tillet. This youth, who had left a perfumery establishment upon receiving the owner's refusal to give him an interest in the business, and who passed for a genius, had taken a good deal of trouble to get in at the Queen of Roses, with the character and habits of whose occupants he was well acquainted. Birotteau took him and gave him a salary of one thousand francs, with the intention of making him his successor. Ferdinand had so great an influence on the destiny of this family, that some account of him is necessary here.

He had, at the outset, stated that his name was simply

Ferdinand, that this was his family name. This anonymous character seemed highly advantageous to him at the period when Napoleon was pressing families for recruits. Nevertheless, he had certainly been born somewhere. The few facts that had come to light in regard to his civil state, may be briefly stated. In 1793, a poor girl of Tillet—a small place near the Andelys—had brought forth a child in the night, in the garden of the curate of the Tillet Church, and then, after having rapped upon the shutters, had drowned herself. The good priest received the infant, named it after the saint figuring in the calendar for that day, fed and brought it up as his own child. The curate died in 1804, without leaving sufficient means to complete the education he had begun. Ferdinand, cast unprotected into Paris, led a roving life, the chances of which might bring him to the scaffold or to fortune, to the bar, the army, trade, or domestic service. Ferdinand, obliged to live after the fashion of Figaro, became first a commercial traveler, then a clerk in a perfumery establishment at Paris, to which he returned after having run over France, studied the world, and resolved to succeed in it at any price. In 1813, he judged it necessary to prove his age and establish his civil state, and petitioned the tribunal of the Andelys to order the transfer of the record of his baptism from the registry of the parish to that of the civil court. He also obtained an amendment of the record, getting the name du Tillet inserted, a name under which he had become known, and which was justified by his having been a foundling in the commune. Without father or mother, with no other guardian than the imperial attorney-general, alone in the world, amenable to no one, he found society a step-mother, and gave it no quarter. He knew no guide but self-interest, and every avenue to fortune

seemed to him good. A Norman by birth, possessed of dangerous capacity, he added to his eagerness for success, the hard and churlish characteristics for which, rightly or wrongly, his countrymen are reproached. Wheedling manners concealed his wrangling spirit, for he was the rudest of judicial bullies ; but while he audaciously contested the rights of others, he did not yield one iota of his own ; he could bide his time, and wear out his adversary by his inflexible perseverance. His principal merit was that of the Scapins in the old comedy ; he possessed their fertility of resources, their address in keeping on the safe side of the law, their itching to take what it is good to keep. In short, he was resolved to apply to his own penury the expression employed by the Abbé Terray in the name of the state, —free to become an honest man, afterwards. Endowed with a passionate activity, with a military intrepidity in demanding of every one a good as well as a bad action, and justifying his demand upon the theory of personal interest, he despised men too much in believing them all corruptible, was too unscrupulous in the choice of means, regarding all means as good, and had fixed his eye too steadfastly upon success and money as the absolution of any moral machinery that he might employ, not to succeed sooner or later. Such a man, placed between wealth and the state-prison, was naturally vindictive, absolute, swift in his determinations, but as dissimulating as an arch conspirator who would cut off the head of probity herself. His profundity was concealed beneath a light and mocking exterior. Though a simple clerk in a perfumery shop, he set no bounds to his ambition ; casting a glance of hatred upon society, he had said to himself : "Thou shalt be mine !" He had sworn not

to marry till he was forty years of age, and he kept his word.

In personal appearance, Ferdinand was tall and of slender make, and of agreeable form ; his manners, neither one thing nor the other, enabled him to assume at need the diapason of any society into which he was thrown. His weasel face was pleasing enough at first sight ; but persons who were much in his company discerned upon it that strange expression often observed in people ill at ease with themselves, and whose consciences complain at certain hours. An exceedingly vivid tint beneath his soft Norman skin gave a sour hue to his complexion. His wall-eyed look was generally furtive, but when he fixed it directly upon his victim, terrible. His voice seemed extinct, like the voice of a man who has been a long time speaking. His thin lips were not wanting in beauty ; but his pointed nose and his slightly rounded forehead betrayed a defect of race. Lastly, his hair, resembling, in color, hair that had been dyed black, indicated a social mongrel, who derived his intellect from a libertine nobleman, his baseness from a seduced village-girl, his knowledge from an incomplete education, and his vices from his abandoned condition.

Birotteau learned with profound astonishment that his clerk went out very elegantly dressed, returned home very late, and attended balls at the houses of bankers and notaries. Such habits displeased César ; according to his notions, clerks ought to study the books of their house, and think exclusively of their business. The perfumer was shocked at such follies, and roundly rebuked du Tillet for wearing too fine linen, and for having had his name thus engraved upon his visiting cards : F. du Tillet, a mode which, according to his commercial views, belonged exclusively to people in

society. Ferdinand had sought out this Orgon with the intentions of a Tartuffe; he paid court to Madame César, attempted to seduce her from the path of honor, and measured the capacity of his employer as she did herself, but with fearful quickness. Although discreet, reserved, and saying nothing but what he meant, du Tillet unfolded his opinions upon men and life in away calculated to alarm a timorous woman, who participated in all the scruples of her husband, and regarded the least injury done to a neighbor as a crime. In spite of Madame Birotteau's address, du Tillet perceived the contempt with which he inspired her. Constance, to whom Ferdinand had written several love letters, soon observed a change in the manners of her clerk, who assumed a complacent air, in order to promote a belief in their intimacy. Without telling her husband her secret reasons, she advised him to send Ferdinand away. Birotteau agreed with his wife on this point, and the dismissal of the clerk was resolved upon. Three days before parting with him, Birotteau one Saturday evening made up the monthly account, and found a deficit of three thousand francs. His consternation was great, less on account of the loss, than of the suspicions which must rest upon three clerks, a cook, a shop-boy, and numerous workmen whom he habitually employed. Whom should he accuse? Madame Birotteau did not leave the till. The cashier was a nephew of Madame Ragon, named Popinot, a young man of nineteen, who lived with them, and was integrity itself. His figures, disagreeing with the sum in the till, revealed the deficit, and indicated that the abstraction had been made after the account had been balanced. The tradesman and his wife resolved to keep silence and watch the house. The next day, Sunday, they received their friends. The

families that constituted the coterie gave entertainments in turn. While playing at cards, Roguin, the notary, put down several gold pieces of ancient date that Madame César had received some days before from a newly-married lady, Madame d'Espard.

"You have robbed a contribution box," said the perfumer, laughing.

Roguin said he had obtained these coins at a banker's

house, having won them from du Tillet, who confirmed the notary's response without a blush. The perfumer himself became purple. At the close of the evening, and just as Ferdinand was going to bed, Birotteau took him into the shop, under the pretext of speaking to him on business.

"Du Tillet," said the simple-minded man, "there are three thousand francs wanting in my cash account, and

I have no reason to suspect any one ; the circumstance of the gold coins seems too much against you not to speak of it ; so we will not go to bed till we have found the error, for, after all, it can be nothing but an error. You may indeed have taken a part of your salary on account."

Du Tillet acknowledged that he had taken the coins. The perfumer looked in the ledger, but he found no corresponding charge in his clerk's account.

"I was busy," said du Tillet. "I meant to ask Popinot to debit me the amount."

"Very good," said Birotteau, quite amazed at the cold indifference of the Norman, who thoroughly understood the honest people among whom he had come with the purpose of making his fortune.

The perfumer and his clerk spent the night in verifications that the worthy tradesman knew to be useless. While going and coming, César slipped three bank-bills of a thousand francs each into the till, placing them against the side of the drawer, and then, feigning to be eovrcome with fatigue, pretended to go to sleep, and even to snore. Du Tillet awakened him with triumph, and went into ecstacies at having discovered the error. The next day, César scolded his wife and little Popinot before the whole family, and made show of great anger on account of their negligence. Two weeks afterwards, Ferdinand du Tillet entered the service of a broker. He did not like perfumery, he said, and wanted to study banking. On leaving Birotteau, du Tillet spoke of Madame César in a manner calculated to lead the public to believe that his employer had dismissed him out of jealousy. Some months afterwards, du Tillet came one evening to see his former master, and begged him to become his security for twenty thousand francs,

and thus complete the bonds that were required of him, in an affair that would set him on the high road to fortune.

Observing the surprise which Birotteau manifested at this effrontery, du Tillet knit his brows and asked him if he did not place confidence in him. Matifat and two tradesmen doing business with Birotteau noticed the indignation of the perfumer, who, however, restrained his anger in their presence. Du Tillet had perhaps become an honest man again, his dereliction might have been caused by a mistress in despair or by a first venture at the gambling table; the public reprobation of an honorable man might cast into the path of crime and misery a fellow-being yet young and perhaps on the road to repentance. So the saintly creature took the pen and endorsed du Tillet's notes, saying that it was with the greatest pleasure that he rendered this trifling service to a person who had been useful to him. But the blood rushed to his face as he acted this complaisant falsehood. Du Tillet could not endure the searching look that Birotteau cast upon him, and doubtless at this moment vowed that relentless hatred towards him which the angels of darkness cherish for the angels of light. While dancing, so to speak, upon the tight rope of financial speculations, du Tillet held the balancing pole so skilfully, that he was always elegant, and had the semblance of wealth long before he was wealthy in reality. When he once had a cabriolet he never abandoned it, and sustained himself in the elevated sphere of those who mingle pleasure with business, making the saloon of the opera a branch of the Exchange—the Turcarets of the period. Through Madame Roguin, whose acquaintance he had made at Birotteau's, he became intimate with the most influential bankers. At

this period Ferdinand du Tillet had reached a pitch of prosperity in which there was neither deception nor insecurity. Upon the best terms with the house of Nucingen, where Roguin had introduced him, he had speedily become connected with the firm of Keller brothers, and had made interest with the first financial circles. No one knew where the young man obtained the immense capital which he manipulated, but his good fortune was attributed to his intelligence and his honesty.

The Restoration made an important personage of César, who naturally forgot these two domestic incidents in the whirl of political excitement. The constancy of his royalist opinions, to which he had become perfectly indifferent since his wound, but in which he had persisted for decorum's sake, the recollection of his zeal in Vendémiaire, made interest for him in high quarters, precisely because he asked for none. He was elected major in the National Guard, though he was quite incapable of pronouncing a single word of command. In 1815, Napoleon, still Birotteau's enemy, removed him. During the Hundred Days, Birotteau was heartily detested by the liberals of his quarter ; for it was not till 1815 that political differences began to agitate the great body of merchants and traders, till then unanimous in their desire for tranquillity, which was felt to be so necessary for business.

Upon the second Restoration, the royal government thought necessary to remodel the municipal body of Paris. The prefect was desirous that Birotteau should be appointed mayor. Thanks to his wife, the perfumer accepted the post of deputy, which rendered him less conspicuous. This modesty largely increased the esteem which was generally felt for him, and procured him the

friendship of the mayor, M. Flamet de la Billardière. Birotteau, who had seen him at the Queen of Roses when the shop was used by the royalist conspirators as a rendezvous, himself suggested his name to the prefect, who had consulted him upon the choice to be made. Monsieur and Madame Birotteau were never overlooked in the invitations of the mayor. Lastly, Madame César collected alms for the poor at St. Roch, in good and honorable company. La Billardière warmly served Birotteau's interests in the matter of distributing to the municipal body the crosses awarded them, laying stress upon the wound he had received at St. Roch, upon his attachment to the Bourbons, and the consideration he enjoyed. The ministry, who desired both to bring the Legion of Honor —instituted by Napoleon—into contempt, by a prodigal and promiscuous distribution of crosses, and at the same time to create a body of followers, and to bring over to the Bourbons all the trades, arts and sciences, included Birotteau in the approaching promotion. This favor, perfectly in harmony with the credit which Birotteau enjoyed in his ward, placed him in a situation more likely than any other to elevate the ideas of a man who had thus far succeeded in everything he had undertaken. The news he had received from the mayor of his preferment was the last argument which decided him to embark in the operations he had just explained to his wife, in order to abandon the shop as speedily as possible and ascend to the regions of the upper bourgeoisie of Paris.

César was now forty years old. The labors which he performed in his laboratory had given him a few premature wrinkles, and had lightly silvered his long bushy hair, around which the pressure of his hat made a glistening circular impression. His heavy eyebrows

might have alarmed the beholder, had not his blue eyes, with their clear and honest expression, been in perfect harmony with his open and manly forehead. His nose, broken at its base, and very large at the end, gave him the surprised air of the quidnuncs of Paris. His lips were full, and his fat chin hung perpendicularly down. His square and highly-colored face indicated, by the disposition of the wrinkles and the general style of his physiognomy, the ingenuous cunning of the peasant. The strength of his body, the heaviness of his limbs, the squareness of his back and the width of his feet—everything about him, in short—denoted the villager transported to Paris. His large and hairy hands, his fat wrinkled fingers, his big square nails, would have borne witness to his origin, even if there had been no traces of it in his person. He had constantly upon his lips that benevolent smile which shop-keepers assume upon the entrance of a customer ; and yet this commercial smile was the faithful image of his internal content, and represented the true state of his tranquil soul. His habitual distrust never went beyond his business ; his caution left him when he crossed the threshold of the Exchange or when he closed his ledger. Suspicion was to him what his printed bill-heads were, a necessary and component part of all bargain and sale. His face presented a sort of comic assurance, of fatuity mingled with good-fellowship, which rendered him an original type, as it took away from the resemblance, otherwise perfect, with the flat physiognomy of the Parisian bourgeois. Without this air of guileless admiration and faith in himself, he would have inspired too much respect ; he thus maintained his relationship with mankind, by contributing his share of the ridiculous.

When talking, he habitually held his hands behind

his back. When he thought he had said something smart or gallant, he raised himself twice slightly upon his toes, and fell back again heavily, as if to emphasize his remark. In the heat of a discussion, he would sometimes turn briskly round, walk a few steps as if he were going to seek for further arguments, and return sharply upon his antagonist. He never interrupted a speaker, and often fell a victim to this exact observance of propriety, for the others cut in whenever they could, and the poor man would be obliged to depart without getting in a word edgewise. His great experience in commercial matters had given him certain peculiar ways which many persons called manias. When a note was not taken up, he sent it to the proper officer, and thought no more of it except to receive the principal, interest and expenses ; the officer had instructions to press the matter until the tradesman was bankrupt, and then to stop all proceedings. César put the notes in his pocket and never went to any meetings of the creditors. This system, and his implacable detestation of bankrupts, he had derived from Ragon, who, in the course of his mercantile experience, had discovered that so much time was lost in litigation, that the meagre and uncertain dividend produced by arrangements and compromises, was more than compensated by the time spent in going and coming, and running after the excuses the dishonest are ever so ready to make.

"If the bankrupt is an honest man," said Ragon, "and recovers himself, he will pay you. If he still continues penniless, and is simply unfortunate, why torment him ? And if he is a rascal, you'll never get anything any way. Your well-known severity causes you to be regarded as intractable, and as no compromise with you is possible, as long as a man can pay any one, it's you that he pays."

Cèsar arrived at an appointment the moment agreed upon, and ten minutes afterward he left with an inflexibility that nothing could conquer; so that his own punctuality rendered those who had business with him punctual themselves.

The costume which he had adopted was in harmony with his manners and his physiognomy. No power on earth could have induced him to give up his white muslin cravats, the ends of which, embroidered by his wife or his daughter, hung down under his neck. His single-breasted white Marseilles waistcoat came very low down upon his somewhat prominent stomach; for César was slightly corpulent. He wore blue pantaloons, black silk stockings, and shoes the strings of which were constantly coming untied. His olive-green frock-coat, always too large for him, and his broad-brimmed hat, gave him the air of a Quaker. When he dressed himself for Sunday evening, he put on a pair of silk small-clothes, shoes with gilt buckles, and his inevitable single-breasted waistcoat, slightly open at the top to show his plaited shirt-frill. His chestnut-colored cloth coat was long in the waist and wide in the skirts. He continued, up to 1819, to wear two watch-chains, hanging parallel to each other, but he only put on the second when he considered himself dressed.

Such was César Birotteau, a worthy creature upon whom the mysterious deities who attend upon the birth of men had refused to confer the power of taking general views either of politics or life, or that of raising himself above the social level of the middling classes. He followed in everything the winding ways of routine; every opinion which he held had been communicated to him by others, and he applied them without examination. Blind but good, not intellectual but profoundly religious,

he was a man perfectly pure in heart. In this heart burned one first and only love, the light and strength of his life ; for his endeavors to rise, and the little information he had acquired, sprang from his affection for his wife and daughter.

As for Madame César, thirty-seven years old at this time, she resembled the Venus of Milo so closely, that all who knew her saw her very portrait in that admirable statue when the Duke de Rivière sent it to Paris. In a few months, however, sorrow and trouble so diffused their yellow tints over her dazzlingly white skin, so cruelly undermined and discolored the bluish circle within which played her fine sparkling eyes, that she had the appearance of an old madonna ; for she still preserved, in the midst of her decay, a pleasing ingenuousness of manner, a pure though melancholy look, and it was impossible not to consider her still a handsome woman, and one singularly reserved and dignified in her demeanor. At the ball contemplated by César, she was destined to enjoy one final and public triumph of beauty.

Every life has its apogee—a period during which the causes which operate are in exact proportion with the results they produce. This high noon of existence, in which every moving force is in equilibrium and is manifested in its highest state, is common, not only to organized beings, but to cities, nations, ideas, institutions, trades, enterprises ; all of which, like noble families and dynasties, spring up, come to perfection, and fall. Whence comes the severe impartiality with which this theme of increase and decay is applied to all earthly organizations ? For death itself, in times of plague or epidemic, now advances, now slackens its course, now revives and now sleeps. Our globe itself is perhaps a mere rocket, a little more durable than the rest. History,

in perpetually repeating the causes of the greatness and the decline of everything that has been seen on earth, ought, one would think, to warn mankind of the proper time to arrest the play of their faculties ; but neither conquerors nor actors, neither women nor authors, ever listen to its salutary voice.

César Birotteau, who should have regarded himself as having arrived at the apogee of his fortunes, chose to consider this halting-time as a new point of departure. He did not know—and neither nations nor kings have sought to write them in ineffaceable characters—the causes of the downfalls with which history is rife, and of which both mercantile and sovereign houses have furnished such terrible examples. Why should not new pyramids be erected, to keep continually before the world this principle, applicable not only to the politics of nations but to the economy of private individuals, that *Whenever the effect produced has ceased to be in direct connection and in equal proportion with its cause, disorganization has begun?* Such monuments, however, are everywhere to be seen, in the traditions and the stones which speak to us of the past, which embody the caprices of ungovernable destiny, whose hand effaces our dreams and shows us that the greatest events are summed up in an idea. Troy and Napoleon are nought but poems. May this history be the poem of the obscure domestic vicissitudes in behalf of which no voice has been raised, all destitute, as they appear, of greatness ; while on the contrary, and for the same reason, they are immense. We are not now treating of individual woes, but of the sufferings of a people.

César, while going to sleep, feared that his wife might make some decisive objections in the morning, and determined to get up early in order to settle things his

own way. So he arose quietly at dawn, left his wife in bed, dressed himself hastily and went down to the shop at the moment when the boy was taking down the shutters. Birotteau, seeing that he was alone, awaited the arrival of his clerks, and stood upon the threshold of his door, noting how Raguet, the shop boy, performed his duties, and of this Birotteau was a judge! In spite of the cold, the weather was superb.

"Popinot, call M. Celestin down, and get your hat and shoes." When Anselme returned he said to him, "We are going to have a talk together at the Tuileries."

Popinot, who presented a wonderful contrast to du Tillet, and who had been brought into relations with César by one of those happy accidents which induce a belief in an overruling Providence, plays so important a part in this history that it is our duty to present a sketch of him. Madame Ragon was a Miss Popinot. She had two brothers. One, the youngest of the family, was at this time assistant judge of one of the civil courts of the Seine. The elder had embarked in the wool trade and had lost his fortune. He had since died, leaving to the care of the Ragons, and of his brother the judge, who had no children, his only son, Anselme, whose mother had died in giving him birth. Madame Ragon, to give her nephew the means of earning a livelihood, had placed him in the perfumery business, in the hope that he would succeed Birotteau. Anselme Popinot was short and had a club-foot, an infirmity which fate had bestowed upon Lord Byron, Walter Scott and Talleyrand, in order not to discourage such as might be afflicted with it. He had that brilliant complexion and that abundance of freckles which distinguish red-haired people; but his clear forehead, his eyes, which resembled gray-veined agates, his handsome mouth, his fair

skin, his graceful modesty, the timidity caused by his deformity, interested all who saw him in his favor ; for the weak are generally loved. Popinot made friends readily. "Little" Popinot, as every one called him, belonged to a highly religious family, whose members were both virtuous and intelligent, and who lived modest and praiseworthy lives. So that this boy, who had been brought up by his uncle, the judge, presented in himself an example of the union of the happiest qualities of youth ; good and affectionate, shy, perhaps, but zealous, gentle as a lamb, industrious, sober, devoted to his master's interests, he seemed endowed with all the virtues of a Christian of the early days of the church.

Upon hearing this mention of a walk in the Tuileries, the most eccentric proposition his imposing master could have made at this early hour, Popinot imagined that he intended to speak of setting him up in business. His thoughts reverted suddenly to Césarine, the real Queen of Roses, the living sign of the shop, and with whom he had fallen in love the very day he had entered the house, two months before du Tillet. When half way up-stairs, he was obliged to stop, his heart seemed so swollen, and so violently did his arteries beat. He soon came down again, followed by Celestin, Birotteau's chief clerk. Anselme and his master made their way towards the Tuileries without speaking a word. Popinot was twenty-one years old—the age at which Birotteau had married. Anselme saw therefore nothing to prevent his marriage with Césarine, though the wealth of the perfumer and the beauty of his daughter were immense obstacles in the way of desires so ambitious ; but love proceeds by the gushes of hope, and the more unreasonable they are, the more confident love is. Thus the farther from him his lady-love really was, the

more lively was Popinot's desire. Happy he, who, at a time when distinctions were disappearing, and when one man's hat was exactly like another's, thus managed to create a distance between a perfumer's daughter and himself, the descendant of an old Parisian family ! He was happy, spite of his doubt and anxiety. Did he not dine with Césarine every day ? Besides, he contrived

to divest his labor of its drudgery, by the zeal and ardor with which he espoused the interests of the house. He did everything in the name of Césarine, and of course was never tired. In a young man of twenty years, love feeds upon its own devotion.

" He will be a merchant ; he will make his way," said César to Madame Ragon, praising his activity in the

factory, extolling his aptitude for seizing upon the niceties of the art, and remembering the brisk way in which, when orders were plenty, with his sleeves rolled up and his arms naked, the poor cripple packed and nailed more cases than all the other clerks together.

The well-known and acknowledged pretensions of Alexander Crottat, Roguin's head clerk, the wealth of his father, a well-to-do farmer of la Brie, placed formidable obstacles in the way of the orphan's triumph ; but these difficulties were not, however, the worst to overcome ; for Popinot buried at the bottom of his heart a depressing secret which increased yet more the distance between him and Césarine. The little fortune of the Ragons, which in time would have been his, was compromised ; he had the pleasure of aiding them to live, by giving them his slender earnings. Still he believed he should succeed ! He had several times surprised Césarine looking at him with what he thought was a glance of pride ; in the depths of her clear blue eyes, he had been venturesome enough to read a secret full of flattering promises. So that he now walked along by César's side, in trembling anxiety, agitated by hope, and excited as any young man under similar circumstances would be, at the age when life has just begun to bud.

"Popinot," said the good tradesman, "how is your aunt ?"

"Very well, thank you, sir."

"She has looked anxious and weary for some time, nevertheless ; can there be anything wrong ? Now, don't be mysterious with me, Anselme ; I belong, as it were, to the family ; I have known your uncle Ragon for twenty-five years. I entered his shop in big hob-nailed shoes, just as I came from my village. Though

the place is called les Trésorières, my whole fortune was a louis d'or given me by my god-mother, the late marchioness d'Uxelles, a relative of the duke and duchess de Lenoncourt, both of them our customers. I pray for her and all her family every Sunday; I send her neice, Madame de Mortsauf, in Touraine, all the perfumery she uses. They are constantly sending me purchasers, M. de Vandenesse, for instance, who buys twelve hundred francs worth a year. If I were not grateful to the Ragons from proper feelings I ought to be from calculation. But I've no motive in wishing you well, Popinot, but for your own sake."

"Ah, sir," returned Anselme, "if you will allow me to say so, you had such a powerful brain!"

"No, my boy, brain is not enough. I won't say that my head was not as good as another man's head, but I had more than that, sir; I had integrity, unflinching integrity. I lived a regular life, sir, and I never loved any woman but my wife. Love is a famous vehicle, as M. de Villèle said very happily yesterday in the tribune."

"Love!" exclaimed Popinot. "Oh, sir, can you have—"

"Hallo, there's old gentleman Roguin, on foot, crossing the Place Louis XV at eight in the morning. What's he doing there?" said César, forgetting Anselme and his nut-oil together.

Birotteau recalled to mind his wife's suspicions, and instead of entering the garden of the Tuileries, advanced to meet the notary. Anselme followed his master at a distance, without comprehending the sudden interest he took in a matter apparently of so little importance, but very much encouraged by the sentiments he had

expressed relative to love, his louis d'or and hob-nailed shoes.

Roguin, a tall, large man with a pimply face, with a high forehead and black hair, had in former years possessed a sufficiently agreeable countenance ; he had been bold and enterprising, for from an under clerk he had become a notary ; but, at the present time, his face, to the eyes of a skilful observer, told of the agitations and exhaustion of undue pleasures. When a man plunges into the degradation of excess, it is rare that his face does not show this degradation, somewhere ; so, in Roguin, the appearance of his wrinkles, the flush of his complexion, were not agreeable to behold. Instead of that pure light which glows beneath the tissues of men whose passions are under their control, and stamps them with the hues of health, his blood had that impurity which results from efforts against which the body rebels. His nose was vulgarly turned up, like the nose of people whose humors, flowing through those organs, produce the secret infirmity which a virtuous queen of France, in her simplicity, thought common to the human race, having never approached near enough to any man but the king to discover her error. Roguin imagined that by taking large quantities of Spanish snuff, he could conceal his infirmity ; but he only aggravated the evils which were the principal cause of his misfortunes.

Is it not a social flattery that has been sufficiently prolonged—this continual painting of men under false colors, this fear of revealing the true elements of their calamities, so often caused by disease ? Physical evil, considered in relation to its moral ravages, examined in view of its influence upon the mechanism of life, has perhaps been hitherto too much neglected by writers

upon manners. Madame César had guessed the secret of Roguin's household.

As early as the first day of her union, the beautiful daughter of Chevrel, the banker, had conceived for the poor notary an insurmountable antipathy, and had desired an immediate divorce. But Roguin, too happy in having a wife worth five hundred thousand francs, without counting her expectations, had begged her not to seek for a separation, agreeing to leave her perfectly free and submitting to all the consequences of such a compact. Madame Roguin, now her own mistress, treated her husband as a courtesan treats an old lover. Roguin soon found his wife too expensive, and, like many Parisian husbands, had another home elsewhere. Kept within proper limits, the expense was at first moderate.

Roguin's first acquaintances in this direction were shop-girls, glad enough to enjoy his protection; but for the last three years he had been consumed by one of those ungovernable passions to which men are subject between the ages of fifty and sixty, and whose object, in this case, was one of the most splendid creatures of the time, known in the annals of infamy as "la belle Hollandaise." She had been brought from Bruges to Paris by one of Roguin's clients, who, on being compelled to leave from political motives, had made him a present of her in 1815. The notary had bought her a villa in the Champs Elysées, furnished it sumptuously, and gradually abandoned himself to satisfying her costly caprices, though her prodigality well nigh absorbed his fortune.

The gloomy air stamped upon Roguin's physiognomy, which vanished when he saw his client, was connected with certain mysterious events in which was involved

the secret of du Tillet's rapid fortune. The plan formed by du Tillet on entering Birotteau's service, changed on the very first Sunday when the respective situations of M. and Madame Roguin fell under his notice at his master's house. He had come less to pay court to Madame César than to induce her to give him her daughter Césarine, in compensation for his quenching his passion for herself, and he had little difficulty in renouncing this marriage, as he had thought César rich and had found him poor. He watched the notary, wormed himself into his confidence, induced him to introduce him to the belle Hollandaise, sought to find out on what terms she and Roguin were, and discovered that she had threatened to discard her lover if he cut down her means of luxurious living. The Flemish beauty was one of those reckless women who never inquire where money comes from nor how it is acquired, and who would give a ball with the funds of a parricide. She never thought of the morrrow. The afternoon was her future, and the end of the month her eternity, even when she had bills to pay. Delighted thus to discover a lever with which to commence his labors, du Tillet began by inducing the belle Hollandaise to reduce her drafts upon Roguin from fifty thousand francs to thirty thousand a year, a service which enamored old men rarely forget.

At last, after a supper where wine had flowed freely, Roguin opened his heart to du Tillet upon his financial difficulties. His real estate being encumbered by the lien of his wife, he had been led to take, from the deposits of his clients, sums amounting already to more than half the value of his office. When the amount remaining was squandered, the wretched Roguin intended to blow his brains out, hoping to remove the shame of his bankruptcy by an appeal to the compassion

of the public. Du Tillet saw a sure and rapid fortune flashing like the lightning in the orgies of this night; he reassured Roguin, and returned his confidence by advising him to discharge his pistols in the air. "A man of your calibre," he said, "ought not to act so stupid a part, and feel your way before you, but operate boldly." He counseled him to take immediately a good round sum, to entrust it to him to be boldly ventured in some scheme, at the Exchange, or in some one of the thousand speculations then before the public. Should they win, they would establish, between them, a banking-house, and speculate with the sums entrusted to them. If luck were against them, Roguin could go and live abroad instead of killing himself, for his dear du Tillet would be faithful to him to the last sou. This plan was, as it were, a rope within reach for a drowning man to seize, and Roguin did not see that the perfumer's clerk was putting it round his neck.

Once possessed of Roguin's secret, du Tillet made use of it to establish his dominion over the wife, the mistress and the husband. Warned of a disaster she was far from suspecting, Madame Roguin accepted the services of du Tillet, who, sure of succeeding, now left the perfumer's employment. He had no difficulty in inducing the fair dame from Bruges to risk a sum of money, that she might never be obliged to have recourse to a more infamous calling still, should a calamity befall her. Madame Roguin put her affairs in order, got together a small capital, and placed it in du Tillet's hands, in whom she knew her husband had confidence, for the notary had at the outset given one hundred thousand francs to his accomplice. Connected with her in such a way as to transform the interest of that very attractive lady into affection, he succeeded in ingratiating himself into her

favor. His three constituents naturally gave him a share in all operations; but he, dissatisfied with this share, had the boldness, while inducing them to gamble in stocks, to enter into an understanding with an adversary, who returned him the amount of their supposed losses, for he speculated for his clients as well as for himself. As soon as he had fifty thousand francs, he felt sure of making a splendid fortune; he looked, with his eagle eye, into the various phases through which the country was then passing; he speculated for a fall during the French campaign, and for a rise upon the return of the Bourbons.

Two months after the restoration of Louis XVIII, Madame Roguin possessed two hundred thousand francs, and du Tillet three hundred thousand. The notary, in whose eyes this young man was an angel, had reëstablished his business upon a solid basis. The belle Hollandaise squandered all she received, being the prey of a dissolute spendthrift, named Maxime de Trailles, formerly one of Napoleon's pages. Du Tillet discovered this woman's true name—Sarah Gobseck—on signing an agreement with her. Struck by the identity of this name with that of a usurer whom he had heard mentioned, he called upon the old money lender, the good genius of young men of family, in order to learn what credit his relative might have with him, if any. The Brutus of usurers was implacably hostile to his grandniece, but du Tillet succeeded in pacifying him by giving himself out as Sarah's banker and as having funds of hers to operate with. The Norman nature of the one and the usurious nature of the other harmonized completely. Gobseck had need, at this moment, of an active and adroit young man to overlook a small speculation abroad. An auditor in Napoleon's Council of State,

taken by surprise by the return of the Bourbons, had conceived the idea, in order to regain their favor, of going to Germany and buying up all claims upon the French princes resulting from debts contracted by them during their expatriation. The profits of the affair, which to him were only political, he offered to any one who would advance the necessary funds. Gobseck was unwilling to do more than make advances upon the claims as they were gradually bought up, and wished to have them examined on the spot by an agent as sharp as himself. Usurers trust no one ; they must have security ; with them the occasion is everything ; they are frigid towards the man whom they do not need, smooth and benevolent when they have an object in it.

Du Tillet perfectly understood the immense importance of the part silently played in the market of Paris by the Werbrusts and Gigonnets, discounters to the trade of the Rues St. Denis and St. Martin, and by Palma, the banker of the Faubourg Poissonnière, all of whom were generally interested in the operations of Gobseck. He therefore deposited a guaranty in money, stipulating for an interest in the affair, and obtaining an engagement that all funds he deposited with them should be employed in their money speculations. He thus made sure of support in case of need. He accompanied Clément Chardin des Lupeaulx on his trip to Germany, which occupied the Hundred Days, and returned upon the second Restoration, having augmented the elements of his fortune rather than his fortune itself. He had been admitted into the secrets of the most skilful operators of Paris, he had won the friendship of the man whom he had been commissioned to watch, for that adroit financier had laid bare to him the springs and principles of national politics. Du Til-

let was one of those who take a hint readily, and he finished his education during this journey.

On his return, he found Madame Roguin faithful. The poor notary was waiting for him with as much anxiety as his wife, for the belle Hollandaise had ruined him again. Du Tillet questioned her, and found that her acknowledged expenses were far behind the sums she had squandered. He thus discovered the secret which Sarah Gobseck had so carefully concealed, her mad passion for Maxime de Trailles, whose earlier performances in his career of vice and debauchery told plainly what he was—one of those political libertines necessary to every good government, and whom the gaming table rendered insatiable. On making this discovery, du Tillet understood Gobseck's indifference towards his grand-neice. These conjectures led banker du Tillet—for he became a banker—earnestly to advise Roguin to lay up something for a rainy day, and to induce his more wealthy clients to venture upon some operation in which he could reserve heavy sums for himself, if he were compelled to fail on recommencing the banking game. After numerous ups and downs, profitable to Madame Roguin and du Tillet only, the notary could no longer postpone the hour of his final discomfiture. His agonies were then profitably worked by his best friend. Du Tillet invented the speculation relative to the land lying around the Madeleine. The hundred thousand francs deposited by Birotteau with Roguin, while waiting for an investment, were of course placed in the hands of du Tillet, who, wishing to ruin the perfumer, gave Roguin to understand that he ran less danger in spreading his nets for his intimate friends. "A friend," he said, "respects appearances, even in his anger."

Few persons of our day are aware of the very small value borne, at this period, by the lands round the Madeleine, but this land would necessarily be sold at a price above its value at the moment, on account of the necessity they would be under of bringing together purchasers to profit by the opportunity. Now, du Tillet wished to have it in his power to reap the benefit without sustaining the losses of a speculation having so long a time to run. In other words, his plan consisted in killing the affair off, thus getting possession of a corpse which he knew he could galvanize into life again. On such occasions, Gobseck, Palma, Werbrust and Gigonnet mutually afforded each other assistance, but du Tillet was not sufficiently intimate with them to ask their aid; besides, he was anxious to conceal his own agency in the affair, though he managed it throughout, so that he might finger the profits of the cheat without bearing the scandal. He saw the necessity, therefore, of possessing one of those living lay-figures called, in commercial language, "men of straw." His fictitious adversary in the Exchange seemed to him the fittest person of whom to make his "âme damnée," and he encroached upon the divine prerogative by creating a man. Of an ex-commercial traveler, without means or ability, except, perhaps, the knack of talking forever without saying a thing, without a sou in his pocket, but capable of playing a part without damaging the piece, overflowing with the rarest kind of honor, that is to say, willing to keep a secret and to allow himself to be disgraced if it would be of service to his client—of such a man du Tillet made a banker, who seemed to plan and execute the loftiest enterprises, the head of the house of Claparon.

The destiny of Charles Claparon was, sooner or later,

to be delivered over to the Jews and Pharisees, if the speculations set on foot by du Tillet necessitated a failure, and this Claparon knew. But the slight share in every operation which was secured to him, was a veritable Eldorado to the poor devil who, when du Tillet fell in with him, was listlessly walking upon the Boulevard with a fortune of forty sous in his pocket. His friendship, his zeal for du Tillet, strengthened by an unreflecting gratitude, and stimulated by the needs of his libertine and irregular life, induced him to say amen to everything. Even after he had bartered away his honor, he saw du Tillet venture it so prudently, that he at last became attached to his former companion, like a dog to his master. Claparon was a very ugly cur, but he was always ready, like Curtius, to take any necessary leap. In the present combination, he was to represent one half of the purchasers of the land, as César Birotteau represented the other half. The negotiable paper which Claparon was to receive from Birotteau would be discounted by one of the usurers whose name du Tillet could borrow, in order to precipitate Birotteau into the depths of bankruptcy, when Roguin should appropriate his deposits. The syndics, representing the mass of Birotteau's creditors, would doubtless act in accordance with du Tillet's suggestions, who, having in hand the sums furnished by Birotteau and his creditor under different names, would put the lands up at auction and would buy them in at half their value, paying with Roguin's funds and with the proceeds of the failure. The notary engaged in this scheme, expecting to have a large share of the precious spoils of the perfumer and those interested with him ; but the man to whose honor he abandoned himself, meant to have and did have the lion's share. Roguin, unable to prosecute du Tillet in

any court, contented himself with gnawing the bones thrown to him from month to month, in his hiding-place in Switzerland, where he found second-hand beauties at easy prices.

Circumstances, not the meditations of a tragic author concocting a plot, had engendered this horrible plan. Hatred, without a desire for vengeance, is like seed sown upon granite; but the vengeance sworn against César by du Tillet was so natural as to be inevitable, or else we must deny the eternal warfare of the angels of darkness and the angels of light. Du Tillet could not, without great danger, assassinate the only man in Paris who knew him to be capable of a domestic theft, but he might humble him into the dust and so far annihilate him as to render his testimony worthless. For a long time his vengeance had slumbered in his breast, for even at Paris the best haters make very few plans. Life is too rapid, too desultory, there are too many unexpected contingencies: at the same time, these perpetual oscillations, though they may exclude the possibility of premeditation, very often foster and abet an idea which quietly lies in wait and can bide its time. When Roguin confided in du Tillet, the clerk saw a vague chance of destroying César, and in this he was not mistaken. The notary, upon the point of abandoning his idol, drank what remained of the spell from a broken goblet; he went every day to the Champs Elysées, returning home at an early hour the next morning. Thus the suspicious Madame César was right in her conjectures.

When a man has made up his mind to play such a part as du Tillet had given Roguin, he acquires the talents of the greatest actor; he has the eye of a lynx and the penetration of a seer; and he can even mag-

netize his dupe. Thus, the notary saw Birotteau a long time before Birotteau saw him, and when the perfumer recognized him, he was already holding out his hand from a distance.

"I've just been to get the will of an important personage who won't live a week," he said, very unconcernedly; "but they've treated me like a village doctor, they sent for me in a carriage and let me go home on foot."

These words dispelled a slight shade of doubt which had darkened the brow of the perfumer, and which Roguin observed; so he prudently refrained from being the first to speak of the land speculation, as he wished this time to give the finishing stroke to his victim.

"After wills come marriage contracts; such is life," said Birotteau. "And, talking of marriages, when shall we wed the Madeleine, Papa Roguin, eh?" he added, tapping the notary upon the stomach. Among men, the ambition of the most chaste is to appear a little bit rakish.

"Well, either to-day or never," returned the notary, with a diplomatic air. "We are afraid that the affair will be noised about, and I am already harassed by two of my richest clients who want to invest in it. So we must either take it or leave it. At noon I shall draw up the papers, and you can have the privilege of joining us up to one o'clock, no later. Good-bye. I'm going to read the minutes which Xandrot was to block out during the night."

"Consider it done, now, I give you my word," exclaimed Birotteau, running after the notary and shaking hands upon it. "Take the hundred thousand francs which were to constitute the portion of my daughter."

"Very well," Roguin said, and departed.

During the brief instant which passed while Birotteau was returning to where Popinot stood, he felt a violent heat within him in the region of the bowels. His heart contracted, his ears tingled.

"What is the matter, sir?" asked Anselme, on seeing the pale face of his master.

"Ah, my boy, I have just concluded a brilliant affair in one single word, and on such occasions no one can master his emotions. You are not altogether unconcerned in it, either. I have brought you here to talk of it at our ease, where no one can overhear us. Your aunt is in trouble; how can she have lost money? Tell me!"

"My uncle and aunt, sir, had placed their funds in the hands of M. de Nucingen, and have been compelled to take, in reimbursement, stock in the Wortschin mines, which have thus far paid no dividend, and at their age it is difficult to live on hope."

"On what do they live, then?"

"They are kind enough to accept my salary."

"Well done, well done, Anselme," said the perfumer, with a tear twinkling in his eye, "you are worthy of the attachment I feel for you. And I am going to bestow upon you an honorable reward for your devotion to my interests."

As he said these words, the tradesman was as much ennobled in his own eyes as in those of Popinot; he gave them that conscious emphasis peculiar to his class—the expression of his imaginary superiority.

"Oh, sir, have you discovered my passion for—"

"For whom?" asked the perfumer.

"For Mademoiselle Césarine?"

"Oh, young man, you are rather presumptuous!"

cried Birotteau. "Keep your secret to yourself, and for my part I will promise to forget it; you shall leave my house to-morrow. I don't blame you; in your place, bless my soul, I should have done as much. She is so beautiful!"

"Yes, indeed, sir," said the clerk, who felt his shirt wet through with perspiration.

"My boy, this is no light matter; Césarine is her own mistress, and her mother has her views concerning her. So come to yourself again, wipe your eyes, put a bridle on your heart, and we'll never speak of it again. I should not blush to have you for a son-in-law—a nephew of M. Popinot, judge in one of our civil courts; nephew of the Ragons—you are as likely to make your way in the world as any one else; but, dear me, the *buts*, the *fors*, and the *ifs!* What an outlandish subject to start in a business conversation! Here, sit down in this chair, and let the lover give place to the clerk. Popinot, are you a lad of courage?" he asked, looking him in the face. "Do you feel brave enough to fight with an enemy stronger than you, and to wrestle with him at close quarters?"

"Yes, sir."

"To sustain a long and desperate struggle?"

"What about, sir?"

"About crushing Macassar oil!" said Birotteau, raising himself erect like one of Plutarch's heroes. "Let us not deceive ourselves, the foe is powerful, formidable even, and well encamped. Macassar oil has been vigorously pushed. The conception was a shrewd one. The square bottles were original in form. In my project, my first idea was to make them three-cornered; but after sober reflection, I think I should prefer small vials of thin glass enclosed in wicker-work;

this would give them an air of mystery, and purchasers always like things that excite their curiosity."

"It would be expensive," said Popinot. "We must get everything up at the lowest possible price so as to make a large discount to the trade."

"True, my boy, those are the genuine principles. But remember one thing, Macassar will resist! It is a plausible composition and has a seductive name. It is offered to the public as an importation from abroad; we unfortunately are a native production. Come, Popinot, do you feel strong enough to floor Macassar? In the first place, you will have the best of it in consignments to foreign lands; for it seems that Macassar really is in the Indies, and it will be more natural to send the Indians a French preparation, than to send them back what they are supposed to send us. Lay hands on all the traveling agents! 'Twill be a struggle abroad and a struggle at home! Macassar oil has been munificently advertised and pushed, and the public knows what it is; we must not disguise its power."

"I will smash it," cried Popinot with sparkling eyes.

"With what?" asked Birotteau. "That's the way with the ardor of young men. Hear me through first."

Anselme struck the attitude of a soldier ordered to carry arms in the presence of a Marshal of France.

"Popinot, I have invented an oil to encourage the growth of the hair, to refresh the scalp, and to preserve the color of the capillary attractions of both males and females. This essence will be no less successful than my Water and my Paste; but I do not mean to put this secret into execution myself; I am thinking of retiring from business. It is you, my son, who must start the Comageneous Oil; (from the Latin word *Coma*, signifying hair, as M. Alibert, the King's physician, tells

me. The word occurs in the tragedy of Bérénice, where Racine has introduced a King of Comagène, in love with that beautiful queen so celebrated for her hair, and who, as a compliment to her, doubtless, gave this name to his kingdom! Ah, these men of genius, what wits they do have! They descend to the smallest details.)"

Popinot kept his countenance while listening to this ridiculous parenthesis, evidently uttered for him who had the education to appreciate it.

"Anselme, I have fixed my choice upon you, to become the founder of a house dealing only in the loftier sort of drugs," said Birotteau. "I will be a silent partner, and will advance you the funds necessary to start with. After the Comageneous Oil, we will try the Essence of Vanilla, and the Spirit of Peppermint. In fact, we'll attack the drug business in order to revolutionize it, by selling its products concentrated instead of selling the raw material. Ambitious young man, do you like the idea?"

Anselme was so overcome that he could not reply, but his eyes, which filled with tears, replied for him. The offer seemed to him to be dictated by the feelings of an indulgent father who said: "Deserve Césarine by making yourself rich and respected."

"Sir," he finally answered, taking Birotteau's emotion for astonishment, "I too will succeed!"

"Exactly as I was once," cried Birotteau, "and exactly what I said. If you do not get my daughter, you'll get a fortune at any rate. Why, why, what's the matter now?"

"Allow me to hope that in obtaining the one I may secure the other."

"I cannot hinder you from hoping, my good fellow," said Birotteau, touched by Anselme's tone.

"Well, sir, shall I begin to-day to look out for a shop, so that we may be the sooner ready to start?"

"Yes, my boy. To-morrow we will go and shut ourselves up in the factory. Before going to the neighborhood of the Rue des Lombards, call on Livingston and ask whether my hydraulic press will be ready to operate to-morrow. This evening, about dinner-time, we will call on the illustrious and good Monsieur Vauquelin, in order to consult him. This learned man has recently given much time to an analysis of the hair, and has investigated the nature of its coloring matter, whence this matter comes, and what is the contexture of the hair. There lies the point, Popinot. You shall know my secret, and henceforth the only question will be how to turn it judiciously to account. Before calling on Livingston, drop in at Pieri Bénard's. My boy, the disinterestedness of Monsieur Vauquelin is one of the great troubles of my life; it is impossible to make him accept anything. Fortunately I found out through Chiffreville that he was anxious to have a Dresden Madonna, engraved by Muller, and after two years of correspondence with Germany, Bénard has finally found a proof copy on India paper; it costs fifteen hundred francs, my boy. To-day, our benefactor shall behold it in his antechamber, when he conducts us to the door after our interview with him. It must be framed by this time, and you will see about it. My wife and I will thus be remembered through our gift, for as to gratitude, we have remembered him in our prayers every day for many a year. I shall never forget him; but, Popinot, buried in science, the learned forget everything, wife, friends, and those they have obliged. As for people like you and me, our lack of intellect gives us the right to have a little more warmth of heart. This is a consolation for not

being a great man. Those gentlemen of the institute are all brain ; you will find that you never meet them in church. Monsieur Vauquelin is always in his study or in his laboratory ; I trust that he thinks of God while analyzing his works. No matter, it is understood that I furnish the capital, that I let you into my secret, and we will go shares ; there is no need of any formal agreement. May success reward us, for we will study to deserve it. Run, my boy, I must return to my business. Stop, Popinot, I am going to give a ball in about three weeks ; get a dress coat made, and come as a merchant already steady on your legs."

This last trait of goodness so moved Popinot that he seized César's big hand and kissed it. The good man had flattered the lover by this confidence, and people in love are capable of anything.

"Poor boy," said César, looking at him as he ran across the Tuileries, "suppose Césarine should love him ! But he is lame, he has copper-colored hair, and girls are so singular, I scarcely think that Césarine—and besides, her mother wants to see her a notary's wife. Alexander Crottat will make her rich ; riches render everything supportable, whilst there is no happiness that is not blasted by penury. In short, I have resolved to make my daughter her own mistress as long as she keeps within the bounds of reason."

The neighbor of Birotteau was a small dealer in umbrellas, parasols and canes, named Cayron, a Languedocian, whose affairs were in a bad way, and whom Birotteau had several times accommodated. Cayron was only too glad to confine himself to his shop, and give up to the rich perfumer his two rooms on the first floor, diminishing his rent in proportion.

"Well, neighbor," said Birotteau, entering the shop

of the umbrella dealer, "my wife consents to the enlargement of our quarters. If you please, we will go and see Monsieur Molineux at eleven o'clock."

"My dear Monsieur Birotteau," replied the umbrella dealer," I have never asked you anything in consideration of my giving up the rooms, but you know a careful tradesman ought to turn everything to account."

"Oh, the deuce," responded the perfumer, "I am not a millionaire. I don't know whether my architect, whom I expect, will find the thing practicable. Before concluding the matter, he said, look and see whether the floors are on the same level. Then, Monsieur Molineux must give his consent to have the wall cut through, and is it a party wall? In short, I shall have to reverse the stairs in order to change the landing place, so that the rooms may be connected. All this will be expensive, and I don't wish to ruin myself."

"Ha! ha! sir," said the Languedocian, "by the time you are ruined, the sun will have married the earth, and will have had sons and daughters."

Birotteau complacently stroked his chin, raising himself up on his toes and falling back on his heels.

"However," resumed Cayron, "all I ask is that you cash these bills for me."

He handed Birotteau a little package of sixteen notes, amounting to five thousand francs.

"Ah!" said the perfumer, running them over, "small fry,—two months, three months."

"Take them at six per cent. only," said the tradesman with an humble air.

"Do you take me for a usurer?" said the perfumer, with a look of reproach.

"I have been, sir, to your old clerk du Tillet; he

would not take them at any price, doubtless to see how much I would consent to lose."

"I don't know these signatures," said the perfumer.

"We have such droll names in the cane and umbrella line—they are peddlers."

"Well, I can't promise to take all of them, but I will try and manage those of shortest date."

"For a thousand francs that will come back in four months, do not leave me to run after the sharks that devour the greater part of our profits,—take them all, sir. I am so unaccustomed to borrowing, that I have no credit—that's the death of us small dealers."

"Very well, then, I'll take the batch; Célestin will reckon up the amount. At eleven o'clock, be ready. Here comes my architect, Monsieur Grindot," added the perfumer, seeing a young man approaching, whom he had met the day before at Monsieur de la Billardière's. "Contrary to the custom of men of talent, you are punctual, sir," said César, displaying his most imposing commercial graces. "If punctuality, according to the expression of one of our kings—a man of wit as well as a great politician—is the politeness of sovereigns, it is also the fortune of merchants. Time, time is money, especially for you artists. Architecture, I have heard, is the union of all the arts. We will not go in through the shop," he added, pointing to the main entrance.

Four years before, Monsieur Grindot had obtained "the first prize" in Architecture, and had returned home from Rome after a residence of three years there at the expense of the state. In Italy, the young artist thought of art, at Paris he thought of fortune. As the government alone can furnish the millions necessary for an architect to build up his fame, it is perfectly natural

for every ambitious student who, on his return from Italy, believes himself a Fontaine or Percier, to lean strongly towards the ministerial party. So Grindot, the pensioner of the liberals, having become a royalist, sought support of influential persons. When a "first prize" conducts himself thus, his comrades call him an intriguer. There were two courses for the young artist to pursue—to serve the perfumer, or to put him under contribution. But Birotteau the deputy, Birotteau the future half owner of the Madeleine lots, on which, sooner or later, would be built handsome blocks of houses, was a man whose favor it would be well to preserve. Grindot, therefore, sacrificed present gain to future prosperity. He patiently listened to the plans, the repetitions, the ideas, of one of those very bourgeois who are the constant subject of the artist's ridicule, and the perpetual object of his contempt, and followed the perfumer about, nodding his head to signify assent to his notions. When the perfumer had explained everything, the young artist attempted to sum up his plans.

"You have three windows on the street, besides the window on the stair-way which lights the landing. You will add to these four windows, two that are on the same level in the adjoining house, reversing the stairs in order to make all the rooms, on the street, connect with each other."

"You understand me exactly," said the perfumer.

"In order to carry out your plan, it is necessary to light the new stair-way from above, and contrive a porter's lodge under the socle."

"A socle?"

"Yes, the part on which we place—"

"I understand, sir."

"As to your apartments, give me a carte blanche for

their arrangement and decoration. I wish to make them worthy—"

"Worthy ! that is precisely the word, sir."

"How much time can you give me to complete the work ?"

"Twenty days."

"How much are you willing to spend ?" said Grindot.

"How much will the alterations come to ?"

"An architect can estimate the cost of a new building to a fraction almost," responded the young man ; "but as I don't know anything about putting a bourgeois through . . . (I beg your pardon, the word escaped me . . .) I must inform you that it is impossible to estimate the cost of these botchings and patchings. I should scarcely get at an approximate figure in a week. Trust the matter to me—you shall have a charming stair-way lighted from above, ornamented with a neat vestibule on the street, under the socle.—"

"That socle again."

"Don't be alarmed, I will find a place for a small porter's lodge. Your rooms shall be the subject of study, and I shall take a lively interest in the repairs and decorations. Yes indeed, sir, I think of art and not of fortune ! In order to reach fortune must I not first acquire fame? In my opinion, the best way for me to realize happy effects at a moderate cost, is not to mix myself up with the contractors."

"With such ideas, young man," said César with a patronizing air, "you must succeed."

"So," resumed Grindot, "treat directly with your masons, painters, locksmiths, carpenters, joiners, etc. I will verify their bills. Give me two thousand francs for my own services ; it will be money well spent. Put me

in possession of the premises to-morrow at noon, and let me know your workmen."

"Give me some very general idea of what the expense will be," said Birotteau.

"Ten or twelve thousand francs," said Grindot. "But I do not include the furniture, for you will doubtless have new. Please give the address of your upholsterer, I must consult with him about matching the colors, that we may obtain the harmony required by good taste."

"Monsieur Braschon, Rue Saint Antoine, has my orders," said the perfumer, with the manner of a duke.

The architect wrote the address on one of those little souvenirs that are generally the gift of a pretty woman.

"Well, then," said Birotteau," I will leave it all to you, sir. Only wait till I have arranged for the lease of the two neighboring rooms and have obtained permission to cut through the wall."

"Inform me by note this evening," said the architect. "I must spend the night in making my plans, and we would much rather work for the bourgeois than for the king of Prussia,* that is for ourselves. I will take, however, the measure of the rooms—the height, dimensions of the jambs, the size of the windows, etc."

"The work must be finished by the day mentioned," resumed Birotteau, "or else no pay."

"Then of course it must," said the architect. "The men shall work at night, and we will resort to methods for drying the paint; but do not allow yourself to be outwitted by the contractors—ask their price always

* A proverbial expression, meaning to throw one's labor away.

beforehand, and put your agreements in black and white."

"Paris is the only place in the world where, by the touch of a wand, such miracles can be wrought," said Birotteau, with an Asiatic gesture worthy of the Thousand and One Nights. Pray do me the honor to come to my ball, sir. Men of talent do not always treat us with the disdain that is usually heaped upon tradesmen, and you will doubtless meet a savan of the first order, Monsieur Vauquelin of the Institute! Also Monsieur de la Billardière, the Count de Fontaine, Monsieur Lebas, judge and president of the tribunal of commerce; several magistrates; the Count de Grandville of the royal court, Monsieur Popinot of the civil court, Monsieur Camusot of the tribunal of commerce, and Monsieur Cardot, his father-in-law; perhaps, indeed, the Duke de Lenoncourt, first gentleman of the king's bedchamber. I collect a few friends together as much to commemorate the evacuation of French territory—as to celebrate my—admission into the order of the Legion of Honor." Here Grindot made a peculiar gesture. "I perhaps made myself worthy of this—distinguished and royal favor, by sitting upon the consular bench and fighting for the Bourbons on the steps of St. Roch on the 13th Vendémiaire, when I was wounded by Napoleon. These claims—"

Constance, in morning dress, here came out of Césarine's bed-room, where she had dressed herself; her first glance disconcerted her husband, who was trying to shape some model phrase whereby he might convey, with becoming modesty, some idea of his greatness to his neighbors.

"This, my love, is Monsieur *de* Grindot, a distinguished young man from abroad, and the possessor of

great talent. This gentleman is the architect recommended to us by Monsieur de la Billardière, to take charge of our little alterations."

The perfumer here made a secret sign to the architect by putting his finger on his lips at the word *little*, and the artist understood.

"Constance, this gentleman wants to measure the rooms; let him do it, my love," said Birotteau, who slipped away into the street.

"Will this be very dear?" said Constance to the architect.

"No, Madame, six thousand francs, or thereabouts."

"Or thereabouts!" exclaimed Madame Birotteau. "Sir, I beg you not to begin without an estimate and written agreements. I know the ways of your contractors; six thousand means twenty thousand. We are not in a condition to commit such follies. I beg you, sir, though my husband is his own master, to give him a little time to reflect."

"Madame, your husband the deputy has told me that the work must be done in twenty days, and if we delay, you will be liable to incur the expense without obtaining the result."

"Some expenses are necessary and some are not," said the fair wife of the perfumer.

"Eh! Madame, do you think there will be much glory for an architect who aspires to build public monuments, in decorating a suite of rooms? I condescend to undertake the job merely to please Monsieur de la Billardière, and if I frighten you—"

He made a movement as if to retire.

"Oh, very well, then, sir," said Constance, entering her chamber, where she bowed her head upon the shoulder of Césarine. "Ah, my daughter! your father

is going to ruin ! He has taken an architect who wears moustaches and an imperial, and speaks of erecting monuments ! He is going to throw the house out of window in order to build us a Louvre. César is never slow in committing a folly ; he spoke to me of his project last night, and begins to execute it this morning."

"Pshaw ! mamma, let papa alone ; Heaven has always protected him," said Césarine, embracing her mother, and seating herself at the piano to show the architect that the daughter of a perfumer was no stranger to the fine arts.

When the architect entered the chamber, he was surprised at the beauty of Césarine, and remained for a time quite speechless. Césarine had left her little sleeping-room in her morning-gown, and fresh and rosy as a girl of eighteen always is, blonde, slender and blue-eyed, she presented to the artist's eye that elasticity so rare at Paris, which makes the most delicate flesh rebound, as it were, and shades with a tint beloved by painters the blue of the veins, a net work of which beats visibly in the transparencies of the skin. Although living in the lymphatic atmosphere of a Parisian shop, where the air is with difficulty renewed, where the sun rarely penetrates, her habits gave her all the benefit of the open-air life of a Transtévérine at Rome. Her abundant hair, thick-set like her father's and so arranged as to display her graceful neck, hung in flowing ringlets, carefully dressed like those of all shop-girls, who, in their desire to be remarked, give the most fastidious attention to matters of the toilet. The beauty of this young girl was neither the beauty of an English lady, nor that of a French duchess, but the full and florid comeliness of Rubens' Flemish women.

Césarine had her father's turned-up nose, rendered

intellectual by its exquisite model, similar to that of noses essentially French, so successfully treated by Largillière. Her clear and healthy complexion indicated the vitality of youth. She had the beautiful forehead of her mother, but illuminated by the serenity of a girl untrammeled by care. Her blue eyes, liquid and clear, expressed the tender grace of one fortunate and fair. Although her happy state of mind deprived her face of that poetic charm which painters insist upon giving to their compositions, by making them a little too pensive, the vague physical melancholy exhibited by young ladies who have never left the maternal wing, gave to her features a certain ideal cast.

Notwithstanding her delicacy of form, she was strongly made; her feet indicated the country origin of her father, for her defects were those of race; as also did the redness of her hands—the sign of a purely bourgeois life. Sooner or later she would become stout. By observing the elegant young women who visited the shop, she had finally caught the true spirit of the toilet, certain airs of the head, a way of speaking and moving, that bespoke the woman of gentility, and turned the heads of all the young men, clerks, etc., to whom she appeared very imposing. Popinot had sworn never to marry any woman but Césarine. This transparent blonde whom a look seemed to transfix, ready to burst into tears at a word of reproach, could alone give him the sentiment of masculine superiority. The charming girl inspired love without leaving the victim time to examine whether she had mind enough to render it durable; but of what use is what the Parisians call mind (*esprit*) in a class with whom the principal element of happiness is good sense and virtue? In a social point of view Césarine was her mother somewhat improved by the

refinements of education—she loved music, made crayon sketches of the Madonna della Seggiola, read the works of Mesdames Cottin and Riccoboni, Bernardin de Saint Pierre, Fénelon and Racine. She never appeared at her mother's side at the counter, except for a few moments before going to meals, or to take her place on rare occasions. Her father and mother, like all parvenus eager to cultivate the ingratitude of their children by raising them above themselves, took delight in deifying Césarine, who, fortunately, had the virtues of the bourgeoisie, and did not abuse their weakness.

Madame Birotteau followed the architect with an anxious and solicitous air, regarding with terror and pointing out to her daughter the strange movements of the yardstick, the cane of architects and contractors, with which Grindot took his measures. She saw in these wavings of the wand a cabalistic air of bad omen; she could have wished the walls lower and the rooms smaller, but dared not question the young man on the effects of this sorcery.

"Don't be alarmed, Madame, I will not take anything away," said the artist, smiling.

Césarine could not help laughing.

"Sir," said Constance, with a supplicating voice, and not even observing the artist's sally, "study economy, and, hereafter, we shall be able to reward you."

Before going to visit Monsieur Molineux, the proprietor of the adjoining house, César called at Roguin's to get the agreement that was to have been drawn up by Alexandre Crottat for this transfer of lease. As he went away, Birotteau saw du Tillet at the window of Roguin's office. Although the connection of his former clerk with the notary's wife accounted naturally enough for the appearance of du Tillet at the hour when the

papers relative to the lands were in course of preparation, Birotteau felt uneasy notwithstanding his extreme confidence. The animated look of du Tillet indicated a discussion. "Can he have a hand in the affair?" he asked himself, the question being suggested by his commercial prudence. The suspicion passed through his soul like a flash of lightning. He turned round, saw Madame Roguin, and the presence of the banker no longer seemed to him so suspicious. "Still, suppose Constance were right!" he said to himself. "But I am a dunce to listen to a woman's notions! Besides, I will talk with my uncle about it this morning. From the Cour Batave, where this Molineux lives, to the Rue des Bourdonnais, is but a step."

A sharp observer, a merchant who had met with sundry rogues in his career, would have been saved; but the antecedents of Birotteau, and his want of capacity to follow a chain of inductions, whereby a superior mind mounts to a cause—all these things conspired to ruin him. He found the umbrella dealer dressed in his best attire, and was about to set out with him to visit Molineux, when Virginie, his cook, seized him by the arm.

"Sir, madame don't want you to go any farther—"

"Pooh! pooh!" exclaimed Birotteau, "more women's notions!"

"Without taking your coffee that's waiting for you."

"Ah! that's true. My good man," said Birotteau to Cayron, "I have so many things in my head that I don't attend to my stomach. Please go on, and I will meet you at Molineux's door, unless you just go up and open the affair to him. In this way we shall lose less time."

Monsieur Molineux was a grotesque little landed proprietor, the like of whom exists nowhere but at Paris,

as a certain lichen grows nowhere but in Iceland. This comparison is the more correct, from the fact that the man belonged to a mixed order, to an animo-vegetable kingdom, that a modern Mercier might class among the cryptogamia, which germinate, grow and decay, under, in, or upon the limy walls of diverse strange and unwholesome houses preferred by these curious productions. At first sight, this human plant, umbelliferous, in the blue tubular cap that crowned it, its stem enveloped in green pantaloons, with its bulbous roots wrapped in heavy flannel stockings, presented a blanched and insipid physiognomy that certainly did not indicate the presence of venom. In this strange product might have been recognized the type of the stockholder who believes in all the news that the periodic press baptizes with its ink, and who says all he has to say in the words: "Read the newspaper!" the bourgeois essentially in favor of order, and always in moral revolt against the government to which he is, nevertheless, invariably submissive; a creature feeble in mass and ferocious in detail; insensible as a tipstaff when his rights are invaded, and yet, lavish of fresh chickweed to his birds or scraps of fish to his cat; interrupting the payment of a quarter's rent to give a canary a lesson in singing; suspicious as a jailor, yet investing in a hopeless speculation, and then striving to make up for the loss by the most sordid avarice.

The malevolence of this hybrid flower was in fact revealed only by use; to be fully appreciated, its nauseating bitterness required the coction of some transaction wherein its interests were mingled with the interests of men. Like all Parisians, Molineux felt the need of domination; he desired that part of sovereignty, more or less important, exercised by every one, even by a

porter, over more or less victims—wife, child, tenant, clerk, horse, dog or monkey—the recipients, in their turn, of the mortification their masters have received from the next higher sphere to which they have aspired. This wearisome little old man had neither wife nor child, nor nephew, nor neice; he abused his housekeeper too much to make her a scape-goat, for she shunned all contact with him while scrupulously performing her duty. His appetite for tyranny, therefore, was not gratified; for the purpose of satisfying it, he had patiently studied the laws on the subject of leases and of party-walls; he had fathomed the jurisprudence of Paris, regulating the pettiest matters of dividing lines and contiguous premises, obligations, taxes, costs, sweepings, awnings on the Fête Dieu, pipes, gutters, juttings on the public highway, and the propinquity of nuisances. His means, his energy, and his whole mind were devoted to maintaining his prerogatives on a warlike footing; he had made it his amusement, and his amusement had become a monomania. He loved to protect citizens against the invasions of illegality; but subjects of complaint were rare, and his passion had finally centered upon his tenants. A tenant, to him, was an enemy, his inferior, his subject, his vassal; he considered that he had a right to his respect, and regarded any one as uncivil who passed him on the stairs without speaking. He wrote all his receipts himself, and sent them at noon on the day the rent was due. Whoever was not prompt received a summons at a fixed hour. Then levy, costs, and the whole judicial cavalry were at once started into action with the rapidity of the instrument that the executioner calls the *machine*. Molineux granted no delay, his heart was callous in the matter of rent. "I will lend you money if you want it," he would

say to a solvent tenant, "but pay me my rent, any delay involves a loss of interest for which the law does not indemnify us."

After a long experience of the capricious and eccentric fancies of tenants, who one after another overturned the institutions of their predecessors, precisely as if they had been dynasties, he had drawn up a set of rules, which he scrupulously observed. Thus, he never made repairs; none of his chimneys ever smoked, his stairs were always clean, his ceilings white, his cornices irreproachable, the floors firm on the joists; the painting was satisfactory; the locks were never more than three years old; there were no broken panes of glass; there were no such things as cracks; he saw no broken floor-tiles except when tenants were going, and then he was on hand with a locksmith and a glazier, who were very accommodating people, he said. The tenant, however, was free to make any improvements; but if he imprudently put his apartment in good repair, Molineux meditated night and day upon the means of dislodging him in order to re-let the newly decorated apartment at a higher price; he watched him, lay in wait for him, and began his series of annoyances and encroachments. He knew all the quirks of Parisian legislation in the matter of leases. A litigant and a scribbler, he addressed bland and courteous letters to his tenants; but at the bottom of his style, as beneath his vapid and officious mien, there lurked the soul of Shylock. He always demanded six months rent in advance, to be allowed on the last term of the lease, and exacted the whole formidable train of conditions which he himself had invented. He always examined whether furniture enough was put in to secure the rent. He subjected the new tenant to the police of his investigations, for he would not admit certain callings; the smallest hammer frightened

him. When it finally became necessary to give a lease, he kept the document, and spelled it over for a week, fearing what he called the notary's *et cetera*. Outside of his ideas as a landlord, Jean-Baptiste Molineux seemed to be upright and friendly; he played at boston without complaining of an unskilful partner; he laughed at what the bourgeois habitually laugh at, talked of what they habitually talk of—the arbitrary acts of bakers who had the villainy to give false weight, of the connivance of the police and of the heroic seventeen members of the left. He read the "Good Sense" of the curé Meslier, and went to mass, finding it impossible to choose between deism and Christianity; but he furnished no consecrated bread, and then went to law to escape the encroachments of the clergy. The indefatigable petitioner wrote letters on this subject to the papers, which the papers never inserted and never answered. In short, he was not unlike the estimable bourgeois who puts his Christmas-log on the fire, celebrates the Epiphany, invents April-fools, walks the whole length of the Boulevards when the weather is fine, goes to see the skaters, and betakes himself at two o'clock to the terrace of the place Louis XV on fire-work days, with a store of bread in his pocket, in order to get a front place.

The Cour Batave, where this little old man dwelt, is the product of one of those strange speculations which seem to admit of no explanation, when they are once executed. It was a cloister-like edifice, with internal arcades and galleries, built of hewn stone, adorned with a fountain in the back-ground, a dry fountain that opens its huge lion's mouth less to give than to demand water from all passers-by, and was doubtless projected to endow the Saint Denis neighborhood with a kind of PALAIS-ROYAL. This unwholesome building, walled in on every

side by lofty houses, has neither life nor movement except in the day-time; it is the centre of the obscure passages that issue there and connect the quarter of the markets with that of Saint-Martin by the famous Rue Quincampoix—damp alleys that cannot be traversed quick enough to escape the rheumatism; but in the night no place in Paris is more desolate; here, you would say, are the catacombs of trade.

Naturally the apartments of this mercantile palace have no outlook except upon the common court; hence they are rented at a very low price. Monsieur Molineux dwelt in one of the angles on the sixth floor, on account of its salubrity; the air was not pure till you got seventy feet above the ground. There, this good proprietor enjoyed the enchanting prospect of the mills of Montmartre, as he walked up and down the roof, in the gutters of which he cultivated flowers, notwithstanding the police regulations in regard to the hanging gardens of the modern Babylon. He occupied four rooms. As soon as you entered, a repulsive nudity revealed his avarice: in the ante-chamber were six straw-bottomed chairs, an earthen-ware stove, and on the walls, which were covered with bottle-green paper, four engravings purchased at auction; in the dining-room were two side-boards, two cages full of birds, a table covered with an oil-cloth, a barometer, a glass-door opening on his hanging gardens, a few mahogany chairs covered with hair-cloth; the parlor was ornamented with small, old green silk curtains, and with green plush furniture, the wood work of which was painted white. As to this old bachelor's chamber, its furniture dated from the time of Louis XV, and was disfigured by long use; a woman dressed in white would have been in danger of soiling her clothes upon

it. His mantel-piece was ornamented by a clock with two columns, between which stood a dial that served as a pedestal to a Pallas brandishing her lance—a myth. The floor was encumbered with plates of scraps intended for the cats, on which a visitor was in constant danger of stepping. Over a rosewood bureau hung a pastel portrait—Molineux in his youth. There were, besides, some books, several tables, with the suggestive green paper boxes sacred to usury ; a console with several canary-birds, deceased and stuffed ; last of all a wretched bed cold enough to give a new lesson to a Carmelite.

César Birotteau was enchanted with the exquisite politeness of Molineux, whom he found in a gray-cloth morning gown, watching his milk simmer in a small sheet-iron chafing dish in a corner of the fire-place, and his watered coffee-grounds boil in a little brown earthenware pot, from which he dribbled small doses into his coffee-urn. To save his landlord trouble, the umbrella dealer had been to open the door to Birotteau. Molineux held the mayors and deputies of the city of Paris, whom he called " our municipal officers," in veneration. At the sight of the magistrate, he arose, remained standing, cap in hand, till the great Birotteau should be seated.

" No, sir ; yes, sir ; ah ! sir, if I had known that I was to have the honor of receiving a member of the municipal body of Paris among my humble penates, believe me, I should have considered it my duty to call on you, although your landlord or—about—to—become so." Birotteau motioned to him to put on his cap. " I shall do no such thing, I shall remain uncovered till you are seated and till you are covered if you have a cold ; my room is somewhat chilly, the slen-

derness of my means does not allow me— Bless you, Mr. Deputy.

Birotteau had sneezed while searching for his papers. He presented them, taking care to say, in order to prevent any delay, that Roguin, the notary, had drawn them up at his expense.

"I do not dispute the ability of Monsieur Roguin, a name well known in the Parisian notariat; but I have my little ways. I manage my own affairs, a passion quite excusable, and my notary is—"

"But our business is so simple," said the perfumer, accustomed to the prompt decisions of tradespeople.

"So simple!" exclaimed Molineux. "Nothing is simple in this leasing business. Ah! you are not a landlord, and you are all the more fortunate for that. If you knew how ungrateful tenants are, and how many precautions we are obliged to take! I will mention the case of a tenant of mine—"

Molineux went on for a quarter of an hour, relating how one Gendrin, a designer, had escaped the vigilance of his porter, in the Rue Saint Honoré. Monsieur Gendrin had committed infamies worthy of a Marat, he had made certain obscene sketches which were tolerated by the police—the connivance of the police being a thing understood! This Gendrin, a thoroughly immoral artist, would bring home with him women of bad character and render the stair-way impracticable!—a kind of fun to be expected from a man who caricatured the government.

And why these criminal proceedings? Because he was asked for his rent on the fifteenth, the day it was due! Gendrin and Molineux were going to law, for the artist, whilst he payed nothing, presumed to remain in his lodgings. Molineux was in the receipt of anony-

mous letters, doubtless from Gendrin, wherein he was threatened with assassination some night, in one of the blind alleys that lead to the Cour Batave.

"To such a pass, sir," he continued, "have things come, that the prefect of police, to whom I confided my troubles (I profited by the circumstance to suggest the introduction of some modifications in the laws that regulate such matters), authorized me to carry pistols for the defense of my person."

The old man got up and went after his pistols.

"Here they are, sir!" he exclaimed.

"But, sir, you have nothing of the kind to fear from me," said Birotteau, glancing at Cayron with a smile wherein was depicted a feeling of pity for such a man.

Molineux noticed this glance, and was wounded at detecting such an expression in a municipal officer, whose duty it was to protect his constituents. He would have pardoned it in any other, but he did not pardon it in Birotteau.

"Sir," he said, drily, "one of our most esteemed consular judges, a deputy, an honorable tradesman, should not descend to such littlenesses, for they are littlenesses! But to the matter in hand; you have to obtain the consent of your landlord, the count de Grandville, to cut through the wall; stipulations must be made for the restoration of the wall at the end of the lease; in short, rents are now low, they will rise before long, the Place Vendôme will extend, in fact, it is extending! The Rue Castiglione will soon be built up! . . I bind myself . . I bind myself—"

"Enough of this," said Birotteau, stupefied, "what are you at? I understand business well enough to know that your arguments will be silenced by that superior argument—money! How much do you want?"

"Nothing but what is right, Mr. Deputy. How long has your lease to run?"

"Seven years," Birotteau answered.

"What will my first floor not be worth in seven years?" resumed Molineux. "What will my two furnished rooms not bring, in that quarter of the city? More than two hundred francs a month, perhaps! I bind myself, I bind myself, by a lease. We will fix the rent, then, at fifteen hundred francs. At that price, I consent to transfer these two rooms from the lease of Monsieur Cayron, here," he said, looking sideways at the tradesman; "and will give you the lease of them for seven years. You may cut through the wall at your expense, provided you will bring me count de Grandville's permission, and his relinquishment of all rights. You shall take the responsibility of any casualties that may happen from this opening; you shall not be bound to restore the wall, so far as I am concerned, and you shall give an indemnity of five hundred francs down; life is uncertain, and I don't want to have to run after anybody to build the wall up again."

"These conditions seem to me pretty nearly fair," said Birotteau.

"Then," said Molineux, "you will pay me in cash, seven hundred and fifty francs, *hic et nunc*, to be deducted as the last half year's rent; the lease shall contain a receipt for it. Oh! I will accept small notes bearing the words "value received in rent," so as not to lose my security, at any date you like. I am very off-hand in business. We must stipulate that you will wall up the door leading to my stairs, by which you will have no right to enter—at your own expense. Don't be alarmed, I shall ask no indemnity for the re-opening of the door at the close of the lease; I consider it as comprised in

the five hundred francs. Sir, you will always find me just."

"We tradesmen are not so punctilious," said the perfumer, "business would not be possible with such formalities."

"Oh! in trade, it is very different, especially in perfumery, in which everything goes as smooth as a glove," said the little old man with a vinegar smile. "But, sir, in this matter of rents at Paris, nothing is unimportant. Only think, I had a tenant in the Rue Montorgueil—"

"Sir," said Birotteau, "I should be grieved to keep your breakfast waiting; here are the papers, amend them, everything you ask is agreed to; we will sign them to-morrow; let us give our word to-day, for to-morrow my architect is to begin work."

"Sir," resumed Molineux, looking at the umbrella dealer, "there is an expired term which Monsieur Cayron does not feel inclined to pay; we will add it to the other little matters, that the lease may run from January to January. That will be more regular."

"Very well," said Birotteau.

"Then you will pay the usual gratuity to my porter—"

"But as you deprive me of the stair-case, and as I have nothing to do with your porter, that is hardly fair."

"Oh, you are a tenant," said Molineux, peremptorily, astride upon the principle of the thing, "you owe your share of the door and window tax and of the customary charges. When things are clearly understood, there can never be any difficulty. You are making large additions here, sir; business is prosperous, I presume?"

"Quite," said Birotteau; "but that is not my reason. I collect together a few friends as much to commemorate the evacuation of French territory as to celebrate my admission into the order of the Legion of Honor—"

"Ah !" said Molineux, "a well merited honor."

"Yes," said Birotteau ; "I perhaps rendered myself worthy of this distinguished and royal favor by sitting upon the consular bench, and fighting for the Bourbons on the steps of St. Roch the 13th Vendémiaire, where I was wounded by Napoleon. These claims—"

"Are quite as good as those of our brave soldiers of the old army. The ribbon is red because it has been dipped in blood."

At these words, borrowed from the *Constitutionnel*, Birotteau could not help inviting Molineux, who was profuse in his thanks and felt himself ready to pardon him for his disdain. The old man conducted his new tenant all the way to the top of the stairs, overwhelming him with politeness. When Birotteau was in the middle of the Cour Batave with Cayron, he looked derisively at his neighbor and said :

"I did not believe that there were people in the world so *infirm!*" This last word he substituted for *stupid*, which he checked upon his lips.

"Ah ! sir," said Cayron, "everybody has not your ability." As Birotteau might well regard himself as a great man in comparison with Molineux, the response of the umbrella dealer made him smile agreeably, and he bade him good-day in a right royal manner.

"I am here at the market," said Birotteau to himself, "and may as well look after the affair of the nuts."

After an hour's search, Birotteau, sent by the market-women to the Rue des Lombards, where nuts were used in the manufacture of sugar-almonds, learned from his friends the Matifats that *dried fruit* was kept at wholesale only by a certain Angélique Madou, who lived in the Rue Perrin-Gasselin, the only house where the

aveline of Provence and the real white hazel-nut of the Alps could be obtained.

The Rue Perrin-Gasselin is one of the alleys of that right-angled labyrinth enclosed by the quay, the Rue St. Denis, the Rue de la Ferronnerie and the Rue de la Monnaie, and forming, as it were, the bowels of the city. Here swarm an infinite number of heterogeneous wares, all mixed up together, some of them smelling bad and others sporting coquettishly—herring and muslin, silk and honey, butter and lace ; here especially were collected together those petty trades of whose existence Paris is as ignorant as most men are of the composition of their sweetbreads and sausages—trades whose blood-sucker and usurer was, at this period, a certain Bidault, familiarly called Gigonnet, dwelling in the Rue Grenétat. Here what was formerly a stable is occupied by casks of oil, and ancient coach-houses contain myriads of cotton stockings. Here is the wholesale department of wares sold at retail in the markets.

Madame Madou, formerly a fish woman, brought ten years before into the *dried fruit* line by a connection with the original proprietor of her stock, had for a long time supplied the gossips of the market with a subject of scandal ; she was a virile and enticing dame, though her beauty had at this time disappeared in excessive plumpness. She inhabited the ground-floor of a dingy tumble-down house, that was held together at each story by cruciform iron rivets. The defunct partner of Madame Madou had succeeded in getting rid of his competitors and converting his trade into a monopoly ; in spite of some slight defects of education, his heiress could therefore continue the business by routine, going and coming in the midst of her stores scattered through coach-houses, mews and work-shops, where she success-

fully combated insects and vermin. Without office, desk or books, for she could neither read nor write, she responded to a letter with a blow of her fist, regarding it as an insult. In other respects she was a well-meaning woman ; her color was high ; she wore a bandanna handkerchief over her cap ; and she won the esteem of the carmen who brought her wares by her brazen voice, usually terminating her quarrels with them by a friendly bottle of cheap wine. It was impossible that she could have any difficulty with the producers who sent her their fruit, for their correspondence was in ready money —the only correspondence she and they understood. Furthermore, the matronly Madou paid them a visit during the summer. Birotteau discovered this untamed saleswoman in the midst of her bags of dried fruits and chestnuts.

"Good-morning, my dear woman," said Birotteau, in an off-hand manner.

"Hallo! *Your Dear!*" she answered. "So you and I have been on agreeable terms together, have we ? We've played hide and seek together, haven't we ?"

"I am a perfumer, madame, and what's more, deputy mayor of the second ward of Paris ; so that, as magistrate and customer, I've a right to expect of you a different style of conversation."

"Well," returned the virago, "*I* don't ask anything of the mayor, and *I* don't fatigue the deputies ; whenever I want to get married, I do it myself. As to my customers, they all of 'em adore me, and I give 'em any style of conversation I please. If they don't like it they can lump it, and go and get swindled elsewhere."

"Behold the effects of monopoly !" said Birotteau to himself.

"Oppoly, my god-son ! has he been in any mischief—

have you come for him, my worthy official?" she said, lowering her voice.

"No, I had the honor to say just now that I came in the character of a purchaser."

"Well, my lad, what's your name? I hain't never seed you afore."

"With such manners as yours, I should think you could afford to sell your nuts cheap," returned Birotteau, giving his name and qualities.

"Ah, so you are the famous Birotteau with a handsome wife! How many of 'em do you want? Sweet as sugar, sir, them nuts is."

"Six thousand pounds, good weight."

"That'll take all I've got," said the woman, in a voice like that of a flute with a sore throat. "Well, I will say, you must have enough to do, if you marry girls and perfume 'em, too! You ain't no lazy bones, you ain't! You'll be a powerful customer, and I'll write your name on the heart of the woman I love most."

"Who's that?"

"Why, my dear Madame Madou."

"How do you sell your nuts?"

"Well, seeing it's you, twenty-five francs the hundred pounds, if you take the whole."

"Twenty-five francs!" exclaimed Birotteau, "fifteen hundred francs in all! I shall want perhaps a hundred thousand a year."

"But just look at the quality of the article. Them as picked 'em up was barefooted, so as not to hurt 'em," said mother Madou, plunging her arm into a bag of avelines. "And they ain't hollow, neither. Just remember that grocers sell mixed dried fruits at twenty-four cents a pound, and in every four pounds they put a pound of them 'ere. Do you want me to

lose on the article to please you? You are a very nice man, I dessay, but you ain't nice enough for that. However, if you want so many, we'll call it twenty francs; I don't like to send away a deputy, it might bring bad luck to them as you marry! Feel the article again, heavy, ain't it? It won't take fifty of them to make a pound! Plump, too, not a wurrem in 'em!"

"Well, then, send me six thousand to-morrow for twelve hundred francs, at ninety days; send them to my factory, Rue du Faubourg du Temple, early in the morning."

"I'll be as spry as a bride. Good-bye, Mr. Mayor, and don't bear malice. But if it's the same thing to you," she added, following Birotteau to the court-yard, "I'd prefer paper at forty days, for I've been too cheap already, and I can't lose the discount, too. Old daddy Gigonnet has got no more heart than a bed-post; he'd as soon suck out your soul as a spider would sip a fly's brains."

"Very well, then, fifty days. But we must weigh them by a hundred pounds at a time, so as to have no hollow ones. Without that, no bargain."

"Ah, the villain, he's up to snuff," thought Madame Madou. "Can't teach him anything. It's those rascals in the Rue des Lombards that told him that; overgrown wolves leagued together to devour us lambs!"

The lamb in question was five feet high and three feet round, and looked like a stone post dressed in a striped frock without any waist.

The perfumer, lost in his calculations, meditated, as he walked along the Rue St. Honoré, upon his duel with Macassar Oil; he thought over his labels, and the forms of his bottles; he even considered the texture of the cork he should use, and the color of his placards.

And yet people say that there is no poetry in trade! Newton entered into no more calculations for his famous binomial theorem than Birotteau did for his Comageneous Essence, for the oil had now become an essence, Birotteau going from one term to the other, without knowing the precise signification of either. All sorts of plans were huddled together in his head, and he took this activity about nothing for the substantial action of talent. In his preoccupation, he went beyond the Rue des Bourdonnais, and, upon remembering that he was to visit his uncle, was obliged to retrace his steps.

Claude-Joseph Pillerault, formerly a retail dealer in hardware at the sign of the Golden Bell, presented one of those noble physiognomies in which everything is in harmony—dress and manner, mind and heart, language and thought, speech and action. The only surviving relative of Madame Birotteau, Pillerault had centered all his affections in her and Césarine, after having lost, in the course of his mercantile career, his wife and his son, besides an adopted child, the son of his cook. These sad losses had thrown the old gentleman into a sort of Christian stoicism, whose beautiful doctrines animated his life and illumined his declining years with a light at once warm and cold like that which gilds the sunsets of winter. His thin and withered head, the cast of which was severe, in which yellow and brown were harmoniously blended, presented a striking analogy with that given by painters to Time, though certainly more common; for the habits of a life spent in trade had tended gradually to diminish, in him, those monumental and repellant characteristics so exaggerated by painters, sculptors and clock founders.

Of medium height, Pillerault was rather thick-set than fat; nature had intended him for labor and long life, his

"HOW DO YOU SELL YOUR NUTS ?"

broad shoulders denoted a strong frame ; his temperament was phlegmatic, and he showed but little visible emotion, though he was by no means wanting in sensibility. Pillerault, not expansive by nature, as might have been inferred from his quiet attitude and his imperturbable expression, possessed an internal insensibility without external manifestation. His eye, the ball of which was green dotted with black points, was remarkable for its unchangeable lustre. His forehead, wrinkled in straight lines and yellowed by age, was low and hard, covered by silver gray hair, cut close and resembling felt. His shrewd mouth denoted prudence, not avarice. The vivacity of his eye indicated the austerity of his life. In a word, his integrity, his sentiment of duty, his genuine modesty, surrounded him, as it were, by a halo, by giving his face the relief of strong health. For sixty years he had led the hard and sober life of an untiring laborer. His history was like that of César, without the fortunate circumstances. A clerk up to the age of thirty, his means were locked up in his business at the time when César purchased government securities with his savings ; finally, he had suffered from the effects of the maximum decree, and his picks and his irons had been taken for the use of the government. His prudence, his reserve, his foresight and his mathematical reflection, had not been without influence upon his manner of doing business. He had made the greater part of his commercial transactions upon parole, and he had seldom had any difficulty. He was a close observer, like meditative people generally, and allowed men to talk that he might study them ; he would then frequently decline advantageous propositions afterwards accepted by his neighbors, who as often repented their bargain, saying that Pillerault knew a rascal by the

scent. He preferred small but sure profits to bold strokes in which heavy sums were hazarded. He sold iron plates for fire-places, gridirons, heavy andirons, picks, hoes, and the other tools of a peasant's outfit. This unremunerative part of his business required a great deal of mechanical labor. The gains bore no proportion to the toil, there was so little profit upon materials so difficult to move and so awkward to store. The boxes he had nailed, the packages he had forwarded, the wagon-loads he had received were innumerable. No fortune was ever more nobly earned, more legitimate, or honorable, than his. He never asked more than he was willing to take, nor did he ever run after business.

In his later days, he might be seen smoking his pipe before his door, gazing at the passers-by and watching his clerks work. In 1814, when he retired, his fortune consisted of seventy thousand francs invested in government funds, which yielded him a little over five thousand francs income; and of forty thousand francs payable in five years, without interest, the price of his stock and good will, sold to one of his clerks. For thirty years he had done business to the amount of one hundred thousand francs a year, and seven per cent. had been his net profit; it cost him one half of this to live. Such was the state of his affairs. His neighbors, seeing little to envy in this modest career, extolled his wisdom without understanding it. At the corner of the Rue de la Monnaie and the Rue St. Honoré stood the café David, where a few old tradesmen like Pillerault went in the evening to take their coffee. There, his adoption of the son of his cook had frequently been the subject of joke—of that species of joke which may be addressed to a man respected by all—for the hardware dealer inspired a respectful esteem, without, however, having sought it,

for his own esteem quite satisfied him. So, when the poor young man died, there were more than two hundred people at the funeral, who followed the corpse to the cemetery. At this period, Pillerault was heroic. His grief, controlled like that of all those who are strong without display, augmented the sympathy felt by the neighbors for "*that good man*," a phrase uttered, in Pillerault's case, with an accent which extended and gave nobility to its signification. The sobriety of Claude Pillerault, now a confirmed habit, would not allow him to give himself up to the pleasures of an idle life, when, upon leaving business, he entered into that state of repose which has such a crushing effect upon the Parisian bourgeois. He continued to live in his old way, and enlivened his old age by taking a deep interest in politics, his opinions being those of the extreme left. Pillerault belonged to that class of the working population which the Revolution ingrafted upon the bourgeoisie. The only spot upon his character was the importance he attached to this conquest—he clung with tenacity to his rights, to his liberty, the fruits of the Revolution. He believed his independence and his political consistency jeopardized by the Jesuits whose power was admitted by the liberals, and threatened by the views attributed by the Constitutionnel to the eldest of the King's brothers. But he was perfectly consistent with his position, with his ideas ; there was nothing narrow in his policy ; he never abused his opponents ; he held courtiers in dread ; he believed in republican virtue ; he fancied Manuel free from excess, General Foy a great man, Casimir Périer without ambition, Lafayette a political prophet, Courier a well-meaning man. He cherished many chimeras, but they were noble ones.

This model old gentleman lived a domestic life, going frequently to visit the Ragons and his niece, Judge Popinot, Joseph Lebas and the Matifats. Fifteen hundred francs amply sufficed for his personal needs. He spent the remainder of his income in good works, in presents to his grand-niece Césarine ; he gave his friends a dinner, four times a year, at Rolands, in the Rue du Hazard, and took them to the theatre. He played the part of those old bachelors, upon whom married women draw drafts at sigh for their little caprices—an excursion to the country or a visit to the opera. Pillerault was happy in the pleasure which he gave, his enjoyment was in the hearts of others. When he abandoned business, he would not quit the quarter to which his habits had attached him, and he hired in the Rue des Bourdonnais a small suite of three rooms, upon the fourth story of an antiquated mansion.

As the domestic habits of Molineux were reflected in his singular furniture, so the pure and simple life of Pillerault was revealed by the internal arrangement of his rooms, comprising an ante-chamber, a parlor and a bedroom. Except in point of size, his abode was the cell of a monk. The ante-chamber, with its waxed red brick floor, had but one window, which was hung with muslin curtains with red borders, mahogany chairs with red sheep-skin seats ornamented with brass-headed nails ; the walls were covered with olive-green paper, and against them hung engravings of the Declaration of American Independence, Bonaparte as First Consul, and the Battle of Austerlitz. The parlor, furnished doubtless by an upholsterer, contained a set of yellow furniture, a carpet, a plain bronze clock and candelabras, a painted fire-guard, a console bearing a vase for flowers covered by a glass globe, a round table with a cloth on which stood

a liquor case. The somewhat modern aspect of this room clearly denoted a sacrifice made to the usages of society by the old ironmonger, who had few occasions to see company. In his bed-chamber, simple as that of a monk or of a soldier—the two men who best appreciate life—a crucific with a receptacle for holy water at once struck the observer. This profession of faith in a republican and a stoic was profoundly touching. An old woman came daily to attend to his room, but his respect for the sex was such that he would not allow her to clean his shoes, but had them done by a boot-black, by subscription. His dress was simple and invariable. He wore, habitually, a blue cloth frock coat and pantaloons, a cheap waistcoat of lively colors, a white cravat and high shoes. On holidays he put on a dress coat with metal buttons. His habits in rising, breakfasting, going out, dining, spending the evening and returning home, were marked by the most punctilious method, for regularity, he thought, brings health and long life. He never discussed political questions with César, the Ragons, and the abbé Loraux, for the members of this circle knew each other too well to venture upon attempts at conversion. Like his nephew and like the Ragons, he had great confidence in Roguin. He regarded a Paris notary as a venerable being—the living type of integrity. In the matter of the land speculation, Pillerault had made an investigation which afforded César good grounds for so boldly combating the presentiments of his wife.

The perfumer ascended the seventy-eight steps which led to the dingy little door of his uncle's apartments, thinking, as he went, that his uncle must be pretty hale yet, if he could mount to such a height without complaining. He found the blue coat and pantaloons

stretched upon the rack on the landing ; Madame Vaillant was brushing and rubbing them while the genuine philosopher, their owner, wrapped up in a gown of warm woolen cloth, was taking his breakfast before the fire and reading the parliamentary debates in the *Constitutionnel* and the *Journal du Commerce.*

"Uncle," said César, "the affair is concluded, we are going to draw up the papers. Still, if you have any scruples or regrets, there is yet time to withdraw."

"Why should I withdraw? The plan is a good one, though long to realize, as all sure speculations are. My fifty thousand francs are at the bank, I received yesterday the last five thousand on my stock in trade. As to the Ragons, they put their whole fortune in."

"But how do they live?"

"Well, no matter, they do live."

"I understand, uncle," said Birotteau, much affected, and grasping the austere old gentleman's hands.

"How is the affair to be managed?" sharply interrupted Pillerault.

"I am in for three-eighths, you and the Ragons for one-eighth ; I will credit you upon my books, till the question in regard to the deeds signed before the notary be decided."

"Very good. But you must be very rich, César, to risk three hundred thousand francs? It seems to me that you are venturing a good deal outside of your business ; won't it suffer? Well, it's your affair. If you get into trouble, why, the government funds are up to eighty, and I could sell two thousand francs worth of consols. But take care, boy ; if you come to me for aid, remember it is your daughter's inheritance that you are encroaching upon.

"UNCLE," SAID CÉSAR, "THE AFFAIR IS CONCLUDED."

"My good uncle, what a quiet way you have of saying the most admirable things! It stirs my heart."

"General Foy stirred my heart just now, and in a different style. Come, go and conclude the bargain. The land won't fly away, and half of it will be ours; though we wait six years, there will be more or less revenue from the coal and wood yards upon it which pay rent, so that we can lose nothing. There is only one danger, and that is improbable: Roguin won't make off with the money."

"My wife said he would, though, last night; she is afraid of him."

"Roguin make off with our money?" said Pillerault, laughing, "what for?" Smiling incredulously, he detached a blank from his check-book, filled it up, and signed it. "Here," he said, "is a check upon the bank for one hundred thousand francs, for the Ragons and for me. The poor creatures have nevertheless sold that miserable du Tillet their fifteen shares in the mines of Wortschin, to make up the sum. To think of worthy people like them in penury; it makes one's heart bleed! So honorable, so upright, the very cream of the old bourgeoisie! Their brother, Judge Popinot, knows nothing about it; they conceal it, that they may not prevent him from continuing his deeds of beneficence. People, too, who toiled like me, for thirty years!"

"God grant that the Comageneous Oil may succeed," cried Birotteau; "I shall be doubly happy. Good-bye, uncle; come and dine with me on Sunday; the Ragons, Roguin and Claparon will be there; we all sign the papers Saturday, day after to-morrow. To-morrow is Friday, and I do no business—"

"Superstitious to that extent?"

"Uncle, I will never believe that the day on which

the Son of God was put to death by men, is a fortunate day. If business is suspended on the 21st of January, the anniversary of the execution of Louis XVI—"

"Very well, Sunday," interrupted Pillerault.

"If it were not for his political opinions," said Birotteau, descending the staircase, "I don't know whether my uncle would have his equal on earth. What good do politics do him? He'd be so much better off if he thought nothing about it. His pertinacity proves that no man is perfect."

"Already three o'clock!" said César as he regained his home.

"Do you take these notes, sir?" asked Célestin, showing him the umbrella dealer's paper.

"Yes, at six per cent., without commission. Wife, get my clothes ready, my love. I am going to Monsieur Vauquelin's, you know why. Above all, a white cravat."

Birotteau gave a few orders to his clerks, saw that Popinot was missing, and guessed that his future partner was dressing, ran hastily up-stairs to his room, where he found the Dresden Madonna magnificently framed, as he had directed.

"Nice, isn't it?" said he to his daughter.

"Now, father, you musn't say it's nice, say it's handsome; people will make fun of you."

"Dear me, just look at this young lady scolding her father! Well, for my taste, I like Hero and Leander quite as well. The Virgin is a religious subject which is very well in a chapel; but Hero and Leander! oh, I must buy it, for Hero's vial of oil gave me an idea!"

"I don't understand, father."

"Virginie, a carriage," cried César in a formidable voice, when he had shaved and when the bashful Popi-

not had appeared, dragging his foot along, on account of Césarine.

The young lover had not yet discovered that his mistress no longer noticed his infirmity. Delicious proof of love which persons afflicted by fate with a physical deformity can alone receive!

"Sir," said he, "the press will be at work to-morrow."

"Why, what's the matter, Popinot," asked César, seeing Anselme blush.

"Sir, it's joy at having found a shop, with a back-shop, a kitchen, with chambers in the loft, and store-rooms, for twelve hundred francs a year, in the Rue des Cinq Diamants."

"We must take a lease for eighteen years," said Birotteau. "But come to Monsieur Vauquelin's, we'll talk on the way."

César and Popinot got into the carriage, before the eyes of the clerks, amazed at their tremendous costumes and at their unusual vehicle, ignorant, as they were, of the great things contemplated by the master of the Queen of Roses.

"We are now going to learn the facts in relation to nuts," said the perfumer.

"To nuts?" returned Popinot.

"You have my secret, Popinot," replied Birotteau; "I let slip the word *nut;* there lies the whole matter. Nut oil is the only oil which has any effect upon the hair, and yet no perfumery house has thought of it. When I saw the engraving of Hero and Leander, I said to myself, 'If the ancients used so much oil upon their hair, they must have had a reason, for the ancients are the ancients!" Spite of the pretensions of the moderns, I am of the opinion of Boileau upon the ancients. I started from that point and brought up at

nut oil, thanks to your little relation Bianchon, the medical student, who told me that the small boys at school used oil obtained from nuts to hasten the growth of their moustaches and whiskers. We need nothing more but the sanction of the illustrious Monsieur Vauquelin. Enlightened by him, we shall not deceive the public. I was at the market just now, at a nut stall, to get the raw material, and in an instant I shall be at the house of one of the most learned men of France, to learn how to extract the quintessence. Proverbs are not so stupid after all, for extremes do really meet. Commerce, my boy, is the intermediary between vegetable productions and science. Angélique Madou collects, Monsieur Vauquelin extracts, and you and I sell an essence. The nut cost five sous a pound, Monsieur Vauquelin increases their value a hundred fold, and we, perhaps, shall render the human race a service, for if vanity is the source of torment to the mind of man, a good cosmetic is certainly a blessing."

The religious admiration with which Popinot listened to the father of Césarine stimulated the eloquence of Birotteau, who allowed himself to use the wildest language that a bourgeois could possibly invent.

"Be respectful, Anselme," he said, on entering the street where Vauquelin lived; "we are now to penetrate into the sanctuary of science. Put the Madonna in a conspicuous place, though not affectedly so, upon a chair in the dining-room. I only hope I shan't get mixed up in what I am going to say," cried Birotteau, in the simplicity of his heart. "Popinot, this man makes a chemical impression upon me, his voice warms my bowels, and even gives me a slight colic. He is my benefactor, and in a few moments, Anselme, will be yours, too."

These words had a chilling effect upon Popinot, who put down his feet as if he were treading upon eggs, and looked at the walls uneasily. Vauquelin was in his study, and Birotteau was announced. The academician knew that the perfumer was deputy-mayor and high in favor, and at once received him.

"So you do not forget me in your greatness," said the savant, "but between a chemist and a perfumer, there is only a step."

"Alas, sir, between your genius and the simplicity of a poor creature like me, there's a whole infinity. I owe what you call my greatness to you, and I'll not forget it either in this world or in the other."

"Oh, in the other we shall all be equal, they say, kings and cobblers."

"That is to say," returned Birotteau, "such kings and such cobblers as shall have lived a holy life."

"Is this your son?" asked Vauquelin, looking at Popinot, who was in a state of vacant astonishment at seeing nothing extraordinary in the study, where he had expected to find various monstrosities, gigantic machines, flying metals, and animated substances.

"No sir, but a young man whom I love, and who comes to implore your kindness, which we know is equal to your talent; for is it not infinite?" he added, shrewdly. "We have come to consult you a second time, after an interval of sixteen years, upon an important matter, and upon which I am as ignorant as a perfumer."

"Well, what is it?"

"I am aware that you devote your midnight studies to the subject of hair, and that you are engaged in analyzing it; while you were thus occupied in a scientific

point of view, I was thinking of it in a commercial light."

"My dear Monsieur Birotteau, what do you desire of me? My analysis of hair?" He took up a small paper. "I am to read the Academy of Sciences an article upon this subject. The hair is formed of a considerable quantity of mucus, a small quantity of white oil, a good deal of greenish black oil, a few atoms of oxide of manganese and phosphate of lime, a very small quantity of carbonate of lime, silex and considerable sulphur. The different proportions of these materials produce the varieties of color in hair. Thus, red hair has much more greenish black oil than the others."

César and Popinot opened their eyes to a ridiculous width.

"Nine ingredients!" exclaimed Birotteau. "What! metals and oils in a single hair! It's well it's you, sir, a man whom I revere, who says so, or I shouldn't believe you. Extraordinary! God is great, Monsieur Vauquelin."

"Hair is produced by a sort of sack-like organ," resumed the chemist, "a kind of pocket open at its two extremities: at one end this organ is attached by nerves or vessels and at the other issues the hair. According to several of our learned members, and, among them, M. de Blainville, hair is a dead substance expelled from this pocket or crypt, which is filled with pulpy matter."

"Just as if it was perspiration in sticks," said Popinot, upon which the perfumer immediately gave him a slight kick in the heel.

Vauquelin smiled at Popinot's idea.

"Promising, isn't he?" said César, thereupon looking at Popinot. "But, sir, if hair is still-born, it's impossible to make it live, and we are done up! Our prospectus is

absurd! You've no idea how queer the public is; we can't go and tell people—"

"That they've got a heap of decaying straw on their heads," said Popinot, who wanted to make Vauquelin laugh again.

"Or aërial catacombs," added the chemist, continuing the joke.

"To think that I've gone and bought the nuts," cried Birotteau, alive to his mercantile loss. "But why do people sell—"

"Don't be alarmed," interrupted Vauquelin, smiling, "I see that you are thinking of some secret for preventing the hair from coming out or turning gray. Now I'll just give you my opinion on that subject, after careful investigation."

Here Popinot pricked up his ears like a scared rabbit.

"The loss of color in this substance, whether it be dead or alive, is, in my view, produced by an interruption in the secretion of the coloring matter—a theory which would explain how the hair of animals provided with fur becomes pale and white in winter, in cold climates."

"Listen to that, Popinot."

"It is clear," resumed Vauquelin, "that this change in hair is due to sudden variations in the circumambient temperature—"

"Circumambient, Popinot!" cried César; "hold on to that!"

"Yes," continued Vauquelin, "due to alternate cold and heat, or to internal phenomena producing the same effects. Thus it is probable that nervous headaches and affections of the head generally, absorb, dissipate or displace the generating fluid. The internal causes concern

the doctors. As to those which are external, your cosmetics come in."

"Good," cried Birotteau, "you bring me back to life. I have been thinking of selling a nut oil, remembering that the ancients used oil for their hair, and the ancients are the ancients! I am of Boileau's opinion there. Why did athletes anoint—"

"Olive oil is as good as nut oil," said Vauquelin, without paying attention to Birotteau. "Any oil is useful in preserving the bulb from impressions likely to injure the substances which it contains at work, or in solution, as we should say, if it were a question of chemistry. You perhaps are right, however; nut oil contains, Dupuytren tells me, a stimulant. I will endeavor to discover what difference exists between various oils—that of the beech nut, the olive, colza, avelines, etc."

"Then I was not mistaken," said Birotteau, triumphantly, "I have met a truly great man. Macassar is swamped! Macassar, sir, is a cosmetic given, or rather sold, and sold dear, to make the hair grow."

"My dear Monsieur Birotteau, not two ounces of Macassar oil have ever been brought to Europe. Macassar oil has not the slightest influence upon the growth of hair, but the Malays give its weight in gold for it on account of its influence in preserving it, without knowing that whale oil is quite as efficient. No power either chemical or divine—"

"Oh, divine—don't say that, Monsieur Vauquelin."

"But, my good sir, the first law that God obeys, is that which requires him to be consistent with himself; without unity, there is no power."

"Oh, in that point of view—"

"Well, then, no power either human or divine, can make hair grow on bald heads; nor will you ever be

able to dye, without danger, red or gray hair ; but, in setting forth the advantages of your oil, you will commit no error, and I believe that those who use it may keep the hair they've got."

"Do you think the Royal Academy of Sciences would endorse—"

"Oh, there is no discovery in it," replied Vauquelin. "Besides, quacks and others have so abused the name of the Academy, that you would be none the better for it. My conscience will not permit me to consider nut oil as a marvel."

"What would be the best method of extraction?" asked Birotteau. "Decoction or pressure?"

"By pressure between two hot plates, the oil would be more abundant ; cold pressed, it would be of better quality. It should be applied," added Vauquelin, kindly, "upon the scalp itself, and not simply rubbed upon the hair ; in this case the entire effect would be lost."

"Remember that, Popinot," said Birotteau, in a state of enthusiasm which illuminated his face. "You see before you, sir, a young man who will count this day among the most eventful of his life. He knew and revered you, sir, though he had not seen you. Ah, we often talk about you, sir, at home, for the name which is nearest one's heart often rises to one's lips. My wife, my daughter, and myself, pray for you every day, as people ought for their benefactors."

"That is too much for so little," said Vauquelin, annoyed by the perfumer's profuse gratitude.

"Well," returned Birotteau, "you cannot prevent us from loving you, as you will accept nothing else from us. You are like the sun, you scatter your light over the world, and those to whom you give it can make no return."

The savant smiled and rose, whereupon the perfumer and Popinot rose too.

"Anselme, look at this study well. Pray allow him, sir; your moments are precious, I know, but he may never come here again."

"Are you satisfied with the state of business?" asked Vauquelin, "for you and I are both engaged in trade."

"Pretty well, sir," said Birotteau, retiring towards the dining-room, whither Vauquelin followed him. "But to start this oil under the name of Comageneous Essence, I want a pretty heavy capital."

"Essence and Comageneous are two words which can't go together. Call your cosmetic 'Birotteau's Oil.' Or if you don't want your name to appear, take any other name. Bless me, here's the Madonna of Dresden! Ah, Monsieur Birotteau, you want to pick a quarrel with me."

"Monsieur Vauquelin," said the perfumer, taking the chemist's hand, "this engraving, rare as it is, has no value beyond that resulting from the persistence with which I have hunted for it. I have had all Germany ransacked, to obtain it upon India paper and before the letter; I knew you desired it, and your occupations left you no time to seek for it, so I made myself your traveling agent. Accept then, not a paltry picture but a zeal, a wish to please, and a solicitude which attest an absolute devotion. I could have wished that you had desired something to be found only at the bottom of a precipice, that I might have come to you and said, 'Here it is!' Do not refuse me. We are so likely to be forgotton, let me put myself, my wife, my daughter, and my son-in-law, whoever he may be, thus constantly before your eyes. You shall say to yourself as you look

at the Madonna, 'Good-hearted people, those, and they sometimes think of me!'"

"I accept," said Vauquelin.

Popinot and Birotteau wiped their eyes, profoundly affected by the kind accent in which the academician pronounced these words.

"Will you not make your kindness complete?" asked the perfumer.

"How?" said Vauquelin.

"I collect together a few friends" (here he raised himself upon his heels, assuming, nevertheless, an air of humility) "as much to celebrate the evacuation of the territory as to commemorate by admission into the Legion of Honor—"

"Ah!" said Vauquelin, astonished.

"It may be that I rendered myself worthy of this distinguished and royal favor by sitting upon the consular bench, and fighting for the Bourbons on the steps of St. Roch, where I was wounded by Napoleon. My wife gives a ball some three weeks hence; pray come, sir. Do us the honor to dine with us on that day. For me, it will be as if I received the decoration twice. We will send you a written invitation in time"

"Very well, I'll come," said Vauquelin.

"My heart swells with joy," said the perfumer, in the street. "I am afraid I've forgotten what he said about the hair; do you remember, Popinot?"

"Yes sir, and twenty years hence, I shall remember it, too."

"He's a great man! What an eye! What penetration!" exclaimed Birotteau. "Without making any fuss, or taking any time to think, off he went, guessed our thoughts, and told us how to smash Macassar. Ah, nothing can make the hair grow, eh? Then, Macassar,

thou liest. Popinot, we hold our fortune in our hands. So, to-morrow, at seven in the morning, let us be at the factory, the nuts will come and we'll make some oil, for its no use saying one oil is as good as another, we should be ruined if the public knew it. If we didn't put a little nut and a little scent in our oil, what pretext should we have for asking three or four francs for four ounces?"

"So you are to be decorated, sir?" said Popinot. "What an honor for—"

"For trade, you mean, my boy, don't you?"

The triumphant manner of César Birotteau, now confident of making a fortune, was noticed by his clerks who made signs to each other, for the ride in a carriage, and the toilet of the cashier and the master, had led them to invent the most extravagant tales to account for it. The mutual satisfaction of César and Anselme, betrayed by the glances which they diplomatically exchanged, the hopeful look which Popinot twice gave Césarine, announced some important occurrence and confirmed the clerks' conjectures. In a life thus busily occupied and, as it were, cloister-like, the slightest incidents were clothed with an importance such as that with which a prisoner endows those of his prison. The attitude of Madame César, who responded to the Olympian gaze of her husband by an air of doubt, indicated some new enterprise, for, under ordinary circumstances she would have been well pleased, gay as she always was when business had been prosperous. By unusual luck, the receipts of the day had amounted to six thousand francs, several bills in arrears having been unexpectedly paid in.

The dining-room, and the kitchen, which was lighted from a small court-yard and separated from the dining-

room by an entry into which led the staircase pierced in a corner of the back-shop, were on the entre-sol, where the room of César and Constance had lately been—so that the dining-room in which the honeymoon had been spent had the appearance of a little parlor. During dinner, Raguet, the shop-boy, watched the store, but, at dessert, the clerks came down again, and allowed César, his wife and daughter, to finish their meal before the fire. This custom was derived from the Ragons, with whom the traditions of tradespeople which they still maintained, kept up, between them and their clerks, the enormous distance which had lately existed between *masters* and *apprentices*. Césarine and Constance then prepared the perfumer's cup of coffee, which he sipped, sitting in an easy chair in the chimney corner. During this hour César informed his wife of any little incidents of the day, told her what he had seen in the city, what was going on at the Faubourg du Temple, and what difficulties he encountered at the factory.

"Wife," said he, when the clerks had gone down, "this has certainly been one of the most important days of our life! The nuts bought, the hydraulic press ready to work to-morrow, and the affair of the land concluded! Here, put this carefully away," he added, giving her Pillerault's check upon the bank. "The re-decoration of our rooms decided upon, and our quarters enlarged! Dear me, I have seen a very queer man at the Cour Batave." And he told her of Monsieur Molineux.

"I see," replied his wife, interrupting him in the midst of an eloquent burst, "I see that you have run in debt for two hundred thousand francs."

"So I have, wife," returned the perfumer with feigned humility, "mercy on us, how shall we ever pay it?

For of course we must consider as nothing the lands of the Madeleine, destined some day to be the finest part of Paris."

"Yes, some day, César."

"Alas," he went on, continuing the jest, "my three-eighths won't be worth a million for six years to come.

And how can we pay two hundred thousand francs," he resumed, making a gesture expressive of great dismay. "Well, we'll pay it with this," and he drew from his pocket one of Madame Madou's nuts, which he had carefully preserved.

He held the nut out to Césarine and Constance

between his two fingers. His wife said nothing, but Césarine, whose curiosity was excited, said to her father, on giving him his coffee, "You must be joking, papa!"

The perfumer, as well as his clerks, had noticed the glances thrown by Popinot at Césarine during dinner, and was determined to clear up his suspicions.

"Well, daughter," he said, "this nut is the cause of a revolution in the house. From this evening forth, there will be one person the less under our roof."

Césarine looked at her father with an air which seemed to say, "What do I care?"

"Popinot is going away."

Although César was a poor observer, and had prepared this last phrase as much to lay a trap for his daughter as to be able to mention the creation of the house of A. POPINOT AND COMPANY, his paternal fondness enabled him to understand the confused sentiments that sprang from his daughter's heart, bloomed in red roses upon her cheeks and forehead, and even tinged her eyes, which she was glad to lower. César now believed that Césarine and Popinot had spoken to each other; but such was not the case; they understood each other, like all timid lovers, without having uttered a word.

Certain moralists hold the opinion that love is the most involuntary, the most disinterested, the least calculating, of the passions, with the exception, of course, of maternal love. This opinion involves a vulgar error. Though the greater part of men are ignorant of the causes which lead them to love, all physical and moral sympathy is none the less founded upon calculations made either by the mind, by the heart, or by passion. Love is an essentially selfish passion. Selfishness signifies profound calculation. Thus to a mind only struck by results, it may seem, at first glance, unlikely or sin-

gular, that a fine girl like Césarine should be captivated by a poor, limping, red-headed boy. This phenomenon is nevertheless in harmony with the arithmetic of the sentiments among the bourgeois. This explanation will render intelligible the extraordinary matches constantly taking place between tall women and little men, between ugly little girls and fine healthy youths. Every man affected by a defect of physical conformation, by a club-foot, by legs of unequal length, by the various kinds of hunch-back, by extreme hideousness, by wine-stains upon the face, by fig-leaves upon the body, and by other monstrosities, independent of the will of his parents, has but two courses to take : either to make himself formidable or to become exquisitely good. He cannot allow himself to float between the two extremes as do the generality of men. In the former case, he must have talent, genius, or strength ; and man can only inspire terror by his power for evil, respect by his genius, fear by his superior wit. In the latter case, he easily makes himself adored, becomes an admirable butt for feminine tyranny, and loves better than those who possess a perfect physical development.

Brought up by a virtuous family, the Ragons, the models of the most honorable bourgeoisie, and by his uncle, Judge Popinot, Anselme had been led, by his simplicity and his religious sentiments, to seek to redeem his slight bodily infirmity by the perfection of his character. Struck by this tendency which renders youth so charming, Constance and César had often praised Anselme in the presence of Césarine. Small in other respects the two shop-keepers were great in soul, and well understood what concerned the heart. These praises found an echo in the young girl's soul ; in spite of her innocence, she read in Anselme's pure eyes his

violent passion—and this is always flattering, whatever may be the age, the rank, or the appearance of the lover. Little Popinot naturally had more reasons for loving a woman than a handsome man. If she were beautiful, he would be madly fond of her to his dying day, his love would render him ambitious, he would wear his fingers to the bone to make his wife happy, he would let her be mistress at home, and would bend his neck to the yoke without being asked. So thought Césarine, involuntarily, and perhaps not altogether foolishly; she had had glimpses of the harvests of love and reasoned by comparison. The happiness of her mother was before her eyes, and she desired no other life; her instinct showed her another César in Anselme, though improved by education, as she had been by hers. She imagined Popinot the mayor of a ward, and took pleasure in representing herself collecting alms in her church as her mother did at St. Roch. She had come to perceive no difference between Popinot's right leg and his left, and might have asked with perfect ingenuousness, "Does he really limp?" She loved his clear liquid eyes, and had been happy in observing the effects of a look from her upon them; they lighted up at once with a timid fire, and then were sadly lowered.

Roguin's head clerk, Alexander Crottat, endowed with that precocious experience due to business habits, had a half cynical, half simple manner, which displeased Césarine, already disgusted by his commonplace conversation. Popinot's silence denoted a mild temper; she liked his half melancholy smile when insignificant trifles amused him; the follies at which he derisively laughed were always more or less repulsive to her, so that they were gay and serious together. This advantage did not prevent Anselme from working assiduously at his duties,

and his indefatigable ardor pleased Césarine, for she divined that though the clerks were in the habit of saying "Césarine is to marry Monsieur Roguin's head clerk," the poor, limping, red-haired Anselme did not despair of obtaining her hand. A great hope proves a great love.

"Where is he going to?" inquired Césarine of her father, endeavoring to look unconcerned.

"He sets up for himself in the Rue des Cinq Diamants, and upon my word, it shall be as God pleases," said Birotteau, whose concluding phrase was understood neither by his wife, nor his daughter.

When Birotteau met with any moral difficulty, he did as insects do with an obstacle, he went round it; so he changed the conversation, determining to have a talk with his wife about Césarine.

"I told your uncle of your fears and ideas concerning Roguin, and he laughed at them," said he to Constance.

"You ought never to reveal what we say to each other in private," exclaimed Constance; "poor Roguin is perhaps the most honest man in the world, he is fifty-eight years old, and doubtless, thinks no more—"

She stopped short on seeing that Césarine was listening, and gave César a significant glance.

"So I did well to conclude," said he.

"You are the master," she replied.

César took his wife's hand and kissed her forehead. This reply was always, with her, a tacit consent to the novel doings of her husband.

"Come," cried the perfumer, going down-stairs to the shop and addressing the clerks, "we'll shut up at ten to-night. Gentlemen, lend me a hand! We are to carry all the furniture from the first story to the second,

during the night! We must put the little pots in the big ones, as they say, so that to-morrow, my architect may have elbow-room."

"Popinot has gone out without leave," said César to himself, on seeing that he was not present. "Dear me, I forgot, he doesn't sleep here any more. He has either gone to put the ideas of Vauquelin on paper, or to hire a shop."

"We are aware of the cause of this revolution," said Célestin, speaking as the mouth-piece of Raguet and the two clerks, who stood in a group behind him. "Will you permit us to congratulate you, sir, upon an honor which reflects credit upon the whole shop. Popinot has told us—"

"Well, my boys, it's true; I have been decorated. So, not only on account of the evacuation of the territory, but in order to celebrate my admission to the Legion of Honor, I collect my friends together. Perhaps I rendered myself worthy of this distinguished and royal favor in sitting on the consular bench and fighting for the royal cause, which I espoused—at your age—on the steps of St. Roch, on the 13th Vendémiaire, and where, as true as I'm alive, Napoleon, often called the Emperor, wounded me! Wounded in the thigh, at that, and Madame Ragon dressed it. So always be courageous, and you shall be rewarded! You see, boys, how a misfortune always comes out right in the end."

"There will be no more fighting in the streets," said Célestin.

"Let us hope there won't," returned César, who proceeded to administer a reprimand to his clerks, and wound up by inviting them all to the ball.

The prospect of this ball animated the three clerks, Raguet and Virginie, with an ardor which gave them

the dexterity of jugglers. They all of them came and went, well laden, up and down stairs, without breaking anything, or knocking anything over. At two in the morning, the moving was done. Cèsar and his wife slept in the second story. The chamber of Popinot became that of Célestin and the second clerk. The third story furnished temporary storage for the furniture.

Popinot, possessed by that magnetic ardor resulting from an overplus of the nervous fluid and converting the heart, in persons ambitious or in love, when animated by lofty designs, into a brazier—Popinot, usually so mild and tranquil, had been prancing like a blood horse before the race, in the shop, after leaving the table.

"What's the matter?" said Célestin.

"What a day! I set up for myself, sir," he whispered in his ear; "Monsieur César has got the cross."

"You are a lucky fellow," cried Célestin, "master assists you."

Popinot did not answer, he disappeared, driven by that most violent of gales, the breeze of prosperity.

"Oh, as to his being lucky," said one of the clerks engaged in laying out gloves by dozens, to another who was verifying labels, "master has noticed the eyes that Popinot has been making at Mademoiselle Césarine, and as he is very sharp, master is, he gets Anselme off his hands; it would be hard to refuse him on account of his relatives. Célestin takes this dodge for generosity."

Anselme Popinot followed the Rue St. Honoré and ran to that des Deux Ecus, to secure a young man whom his commercial second sight pointed out to him as destined to be the principal instrument of his fortune. Judge Popinot had rendered a service to the most able traveling agent in Paris, whose triumphant glibness

and energy obtained for him, somewhat later, the surname of "the illustrious." Especially devoted to the hat line, and to articles essentially Parisian, this king of commercial travelers was simply and unpretendingly named Gaudissart. At the age of twenty-two, he was already conspicuous for the potency of his mercantile magnetism. At that time he was of slight frame, with a sparkling eye and expressive face; he possessed an unfailing memory, and the art to perceive at a glance the particular taste of each successive customer. He deserved to be what he afterwards became, the king of agents, the *Frenchman*, par excellence.

Several days previous to this Popinot had met Gaudissart, who had said that he was on the point of leaving Paris; the hope of finding him still in the city was the motive which had started Anselme off for the Rue des Deux Ecus, where he learned that the traveler had taken his place at the diligence office. Properly to bid farewell to the capital, Gaudissart had gone to see a new play at the Vaudeville; Popinot determined to wait for him. By entrusting the sale of his nut oil to this invaluable inaugurator of mercantile inventions, who was already petted by the wealthiest houses, would he not draw a draft on fortune? Now Popinot felt sure of Gaudissart, for this reason. The commercial agent, so versed in the art of cajoling those most refractory people, small country traders, had allowed himself to be involved in the first conspiracy against the Bourbons, after the Hundred Days. Gaudissart, to whom liberty was indispensable, found himself in prison, held upon a capital charge. Judge Popinot, commissioned to investigate the affair, had found no ground for an indictment against him, believing that his imprudence and folly only had compromised him. With a judge anxious to please the

party in power, or one of advanced royalist opinions, the unfortunate clerk would have gone to the scaffold. Gaudissart, who felt he owed his life to the examining judge, deeply regretted his inability to recognize his obligation otherwise than by vain expressions of his gratitude. Unable to thank a judge for having administered justice, he had gone to the house of the Ragons, to declare himself the vassal of all the Popinots.

While waiting for him, Popinot naturally went to have another look at his shop in the Rue des Cinq Diamants, and to get the owner's address, that he might negotiate for a lease. Wandering in the obscure labyrinth around the markets, and ruminating over the means of organizing a rapid success, he was enabled, in the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, to seize upon a happy opportunity, not likely to occur again, and with which he intended to treat César the next morning. Standing on guard at the door of the Hotel du Commerce, at the extremity of the Rue des Deux Ecus, near midnight, Popinot heard in the distance, in the Rue de Grenelle, the closing lines of a play sung by Gaudissart with the accompaniment of a cane significantly dragged over the paving-stones.

"Sir," said Anselme, starting suddenly out from the door, "two words."

"Eleven, if you like," said the traveling agent, raising his loaded cane upon the aggressor.

"My name is Popinot," said poor Anselme.

"Enough," said Gaudissart, recognizing him. "What do you want? Money? Absent on furlough, but more can be had. My aid in a duel? I'm yours, from the feet to the occiput." And he sang,

"Voila, voila,
Le vrai soldat francais!"

"Come and talk with me for ten minutes; not in your chamber, we might be overheard, but upon the Quai de l'Horloge, there'll be no one there at this time of night," said Popinot; "it's about something of the greatest consequence."

"All right, come!"

In ten minutes, Gaudissart, informed of Popinot's secret, had acknowledged its importance.

"Paraissez, parfumeurs, coiffeurs et debitants!"

cried Gaudissart, caricaturing Lafon in the character of the Cid. "I'm going to inveigle all the shopkeepers in France and Navarre. Oh! an idea! I was off to-morrow, but I'll wait and take commissions in the Paris perfumery line."

"What for?"

"To choke off your rivals, simpleton! If I take their commissions, I can drive their perfidious cosmetics out of the market by talking and blowing about none but yours. A famous commercial traveler's trick! Ha! Ha! We are the diplomatists of trade. Excellent! As to your prospectus, I'll undertake to manage it. There's a young fellow, Andoche Finot by name, one of my school-day friends, the son of the hatter of the Rue du Coq, the old gent who started me on my travels in the hat line. Andoche, who has no little wit of his own, has taken, besides, that of all the heads that his father furnishes; he is in the literary way, and does up the third rate theatres in the *Courrier des Spectacles*. His father, an old cur with plenty of reasons for not liking mind, does not believe in mind—impossible to convince him that mind has a market value, and that a man may make his fortune by mind. The elderly Finot hopes to starve the youthful Finot out. Andoche, really an able

man and my friend—and I only associate in a commercial point of view with flats—writes mottoes for the FAITHFUL SHEPHERD which pays him well, while the newspapers on which he works like a galley-slave, feed him on mortifications and refusals. The jealousy that exists in that line is incredible—just as in "Paris goods." Finot had written a superb comedy in one act for Mademoiselle Mars—ah, there's an actress that I adore! Well, what do you think, to get it acted he had to take it to the Gaîté! Andoche understands the prospectuses, he enters into the views of the dealer; he isn't proud, he'll get up our circular gratis. We'll treat him to cake and a bowl of punch; and listen, Popinot, no bad jokes; I travel without commission, your competitors shall pay; I'll hoodwink 'em; I'll mystify 'em. Let us understand each other. Success in this enterprise is, with me, an affair of honor. My reward is to be groomsman at your wedding. I'll go to Italy, Germany, England! I'll carry with me placards in every language. I'll have them stuck up every where, at the church doors in country towns, and in all the choice spots that I know in the rural districts. Your oil shall glisten, your oil shall glow, your oil shall ignite; it shall be on everybody's head. Ah! your marriage shall be no marriage over the left, but a marriage with mushrooms and wine sauce! You shall have your Césarine, or I will never be called the Illustrious—a name given me by old father Finot, for having made his white hats take. In selling your oil, I stick to my line, the human head; nut oil and beavers being well-known for their protecting influence upon the public hair."

Popinot returned to his aunt's house, where he was to sleep, in such a fever, caused by his anticipations of success, that the streets seemed to him running streams

of oil. He slept little, dreamed that his hair was growing like mad, and saw two angels unrolling, as in a melodrama, a device upon which were inscribed the words "Césarean Oil." He woke up, and remembering his dream, resolved to give this name to his oil, choosing to consider this fantasy of his slumber as an order from on high.

César and Popinot were at the workshop in the Faubourg du Temple long before the arrival of the nuts. While waiting for Madame Madou's porters, Popinot narrated, with triumphant glee, his alliance with Gaudissart.

"We possess the illustrious Gaudissart, then we are millionaires," cried the perfumer, giving his hand to his book-keeper in a style which doubtless resembled that of Louis XIV receiving Marshal Villars on his return from Denain.

"We've got something else still," said the joyous clerk, taking out of his pocket a rather flat looking bottle, like an oblong cucumber with sides; "I have found ten thousand vials like this pattern, ready made and on hand, at four sous apiece and six months credit."

"Anselme," said Birotteau, contemplating the bewildering form of this bottle, and speaking in serious tones, "yesterday, in the Tuileries, yes, no longer ago than yesterday, you said, I will succeed! And now I say to you, You shall succeed! Four sous! Six months! An original shape! Macassar is off the handle, Macassar has been dwelt a tremendous blow! Wasn't I sharp to buy up all the nuts in Paris! Where did you come across these vials?"

"I was waiting to talk to Gaudissart, and was lounging about—"

"Just like me the other day," cried Birotteau.

"Going down through the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, I noticed, in the shop of a wholesale dealer in glass globes and hollow ware, who has an immense establishment, I noticed this flacon. It dazzled me like a sudden flash of light, and I heard a voice which said, "That's the very thing!"

"Born a tradesman; he'll get my daughter," muttered César.

"I went in, and saw thousands of similar flacons packed in boxes."

"You didn't ask about them?"

"You don't think me such a sap-head!" cried Anselme, in mortification.

"Born a tradesman," repeated César.

"I asked for globes to put little wax figures under. While inquiring the price, I found fault with the form of these bottles. Led on to make a clean breast of it, my gentleman acknowledged that Faille and Bouchot, who failed lately, were to have got up a cosmetic, and wanted vials of some peculiar shape; he was suspicious of them and required half the amount in cash. Faille and Bouchot, in the hope of succeeding, let him have the money, but burst during the manufacture. The receivers, called upon to pay, had just compromised with him by leaving him the bottles and the money advanced, as an indemnity for an article claimed to be ridiculous and unsaleable. The bottles cost eight sous to make, and he would be happy to get rid of them at four. Heaven knows how long he would have to keep such a repulsive thing on hand. 'Will you engage,' I said, 'to supply ten thousand of them at four sous? I can take them off your hands, I am clerk at Monsieur Birotteau's.' So I commenced operating upon him, I twisted him

round, I got the better of him, I warmed him up, and he surrendered !"

"Four sous," said Birotteau. "Do you know that we can put the oil as low as three francs, give twenty sous discount, and make thirty clear?"

"Césarean Oil !" cried Popinot.

"Césarean Oil? Ah, my young gentleman in love, you want to flatter both father and daughter ! Let it go, though, I'm willing ; Césarean Oil ! The Cæsars controlled the world, they doubtless had fine heads of hair."

"Cæsar was bald," suggested Popinot.

"Because he didn't use our oil ! We'll say so, at any rate ! Three francs for Césarean Oil, while Macassar costs double. Gaudissart is on hand ; we'll make one hundred thousand francs in the year, for we'll cajole every head with any respect for itself into buying twelve bottles a year, or eighteen francs net ! Ten thousand heads ! One hundred and eighty thousand francs ! We are millionaires !"

On the delivery of the nuts, Raguet, the workmen, Popinot and César prepared a sufficient quantity, and by four o'clock obtained a few pounds of oil. Popinot presented the product to Vauquelin, who gave Popinot a formula for mixing the essence of nuts with less expensive oleaginous substances, and for scenting it. Popinot took immediate steps for procuring the necessary patents. The devoted Gaudissart lent Popinot the money with which to pay the fiscal charges, the clerk being ambitious to contribute his half to the expenses of opening the establishment.

Prosperity invariably brings with it an intoxication which inferior men never can bear. This excitement resulted as might easily have been foreseen. Grindot

came, presented a colored sketch of the charming interior of Birotteau's rooms, as they would appear when decorated and furnished. Birotteau was overcome and consented to everything. Masons were speedily dealing blows with pickaxes which made both the house and Constance groan. The painter, Monsieur Lourdois, a very rich contractor, who promised to give the matter his own personal attention, talked of gilding the parlor. At this word, Constance interfered.

"Monsieur Lourdois," she said, "you have an income of thirty thousand francs, you dwell in your own house, you can do whatever you like to it; but as for us—"

"Madame, it seems to me that tradespeople ought to shine whenever they can, and not let themselves be crushed by the aristocracy. Here is Monsieur Birotteau in the government, he is a prominent man."

"Yes, but he's a shop-keeping man, too," retorted Constance, before her clerks and the five persons who heard her; "neither he nor I, nor his friends nor his enemies, will forget it."

Birotteau raised himself upon his toes, and fell back upon his heels several times, with his hands crossed behind his back.

"My wife is right," he said. "We will be humble in our prosperity. Besides, as long as a man is in business, he should be prudent in his expenditures, unostentatious in his luxury; the law requires this when it says that he shall not incur *expenses deemed excessive.* If the enlargement and decoration of my lodgings are unreasonably costly, it would be imprudent in me to go beyond proper limits, and you yourself would blame me, Lourdois. The neighborhood has its eyes upon me, and people look with jealous and envious gaze upon fortune's

favorites! You'll soon find that out, young man," he said to Grindot; "if they calumniate us, at least give them no reason for scandal."

"Neither calumny nor scandal can reach you," said Lourdois; "you occupy a fine position, you are so used to business that you know how to calculate your undertakings; you are a sharp one, you are."

"True, I have some experience in business matters. By the way, do you know why we enlarge? If I exact a heavy forfeit in case of non-fulfilment, it is because—"

"No, I don't know."

"It is because my wife and I collect a few friends together, as much to celebrate the evacuation of the territory, as to commemorate my admission into the Legion of Honor."

"What! what! They have given you the cross!"

"Yes. I perhaps rendered myself worthy of this distinguished and royal favor, in sitting on the consular bench, and in fighting for the royal cause on the 13th of Vendémiaire, at St. Roch, when I was wounded by Napoleon. I shall be happy to see you; bring your wife and daughter."

"Delighted, I'm sure, at the honor you are good enough to do us;" said Lourdois, who was a liberal, "but you are a cunning one, papa Birotteau; you invite me so as to make sure I won't be behind time. Very good. I'll bring my best workmen; we'll make a terrific fire, to dry the paint; we have several drying processes, too, for it won't do to dance in a fog exhaled from plaster. We'll slick up with a coat of varnish, to take away the smell."

Three days afterwards, the tradespeople of the neighborhood were greatly excited by the announcement of the ball that Birotteau was preparing. Besides, every

one could see the props upon the outside, made necessary by the rapid change of the staircase, the square wooden troughs through which the rubbish was thrown down into carts standing there for the purpose. The workmen vigorously laboring by the light of torches, for there were day gangs and night gangs, attracted a crowd of idlers and lookers-on in the street, and the gossips found sufficient grounds in these preparations for announcing the most stupendous festivities.

Upon the Sunday agreed upon for the conclusion of the bargain, Monsieur aad Madame Ragon, and uncle Pillerault, came about four o'clock, after Vespers. On account of the demolition which was going on, César said, he had invited for that occasion none but Charles Claparon, Crottat and Roguin. The notary brought the *Journal des Débats*, in which M. de la Billardière had caused the insertion of the following article :

"We understand that the evacuation of the territory is to be celebrated with enthusiasm throughout the country, but at Paris the members of the municipal body feel acutely that the time has come to restore that splendor to the capital which had been very properly suspended during the foreign occupation. Each of the mayors and deputies intends to give a ball, so that the winter promises to be very brilliant ; this national impulse will be followed up. Among all the anticipated festivities, none excites so much interest as the ball of Monsieur Birotteau, lately made a knight of the Legion of Honor, and so well known for his attachment to the royal cause. Monsieur Birotteau, wounded in the contest at St. Roch, on the 13th of Vendémiaire, and one of the most respected of our consular judges, is doubly deserving of this honor."

"How well people write now-a-days," exclaimed César.

"They've got something about us in the paper," he said to Pillerault.

"Well, what if they have!" replied his uncle, who had a peculiar detestation of the *Journal des Débats*.

"This article will perhaps help us sell our Sultana Paste and Carminative Water," said Constance in Madame Ragon's ear, without at all sharing the transports of her husband.

Madame Ragon, a tall, dried-up and withered lady, with a pinched nose and thin lips, looked somewhat like a marchioness of the old school. Quite a wide space around her eyes had become soft and flabby, as is often the case with old women who have been tried by misfortune. Her expression, which, though affable, was serene and dignified, impressed the beholder with respect. She had about her, too, that inexpressible singularity which takes one by surprise, though without exciting laughter, and which, in her case, was rendered intelligible by her dress and her peculiar ways. She wore lace mittens, and went out, whatever the weather, with a long-handled parasol like that which Marie Antoinette used at Trianon; her robe, the usual color of which was that pale brown called "dead-leaf" color, lay over the hips in inimitable folds, the secrets of which the dowagers of other days have carried away with them. She invariably appeared in a black mantilla trimmed with black lace of a coarse square mesh; her caps, of an antique pattern, were open-worked like old-fashioned carved frames. She took snuff with the most exquisite neatness, and with gestures which will be remembered by such young people of our time as have had the happiness of seeing their great-aunts or grandmothers solemnly replace their golden boxes by them upon the

table, and shake off the loose grains from their neckerchiefs.

Monsieur Ragon was a little man not over five feet high, with a nut-cracker face of which nothing was visible but the eyes, two sharp cheek-bones, a nose and a chin ; he had no teeth, swallowed half what he said, had a dribbling style of conversation, was gallant and pretentious, and continually smiled the smile with which he had been accustomed to receive the fair dames whom various errands brought to his shop-door. Upon his skull, executed in powder, was a snowy, nicely-scraped half-moon flanked by two wings which were separated by a small cue tied up in a ribbon. He wore a light blue coat, white waistcoat, tights and silk stockings, shoes with gold buckles, and black silk gloves. The most striking peculiarity of his character was his way of walking about the streets with his hat in his hand. He looked like a messenger of the Chamber of Peers, an usher of the private apartments of the king ; in short, like one of those people occupying a position so near a power as to receive a reflection from it, while remaining nothing to speak of himself.

"Well, Birotteau," he said with an important air, "have you repented, boy, of having listened to us in the good old times ? Have you ever doubted the gratitude of our well-beloved sovereigns ?"

"You must be very happy, my dear," said Madame Ragon to Madame Birotteau.

"Well, yes," returned the fair vendor of perfumes, still, as she ever had been, under the influence of the long-handled umbrella, the butterfly caps, the tight sleeves and the large neckerchiefs *à la Julie* which Madame Ragon wore.

"Césarine is charming to-day. Come here, pretty

one," she said, in her shrill voice and with a patronizing manner.

"Shall we finish up our business before dinner," said uncle Pillerault.

"We are waiting for Monsieur Claparon," said Roguin; "I left him dressing himself."

"Monsieur Roguin," said César, "I hope you told him we were to dine in a miserable little entre-sol—"

"He thought it splendid sixteen years ago," murmured Constance.

"In the midst of rubbish and with workmen all round."

"Oh, you'll find him a regular good fellow, and easy to get along with," said Roguin."

"I have put Raguet on guard in the shop, there's no passage through our door; you saw how things are pulled down," said César to the notary.

"Why didn't you bring your nephew?" said Pillerault to Madame Ragon.

"Shall we see him?" asked Césarine.

"No, sweet," returned Madame Ragon. "Anselme, poor child, is working ready to kill himself. That street, where there's neither air nor sun, that foul Rue des Cinq Diamants frightens me. The gutter always runs blue, green or black. I'm afraid he'll come to his death there. But when young folks have got something in their head, it's no use," she whispered to Césarine, at the same time making a gesture which told that the word "head" was to be understood as meaning "heart."

"Has he signed his lease?" asked César.

"Yesterday, and before a notary. He has got eighteen years, but they require six months rent in advance."

"Well, Monsieur Ragon, are you satisfied with me?"

said the perfumer. "I think I've given him the secret of a discovery—which—hum—well, well, no matter!"

"We know you by heart, César," said little Ragon, taking and pressing his hands with religious friendship.

Roguin was not without uneasiness on the subject of the arrival of Claparon, whose manners and style might alarm these virtuous citizens. He thought it necessary, therefore, to prepare their minds.

"You are about to see," said he to Ragon, Pillerault and the ladies, "an original who conceals his talents under disgustingly bad manners, for he has risen from a very low position by mere force of mind. He will doubtless acquire better manners by dint of associating with bankers. You will meet him, perhaps, upon the Boulevard or in a café, drinking and playing billiards without any cravat, and looking, generally, like the biggest ragamuffin in town; but it's not so—far from it; at that very moment he is engaged thinking of new schemes for stirring up the industrial resources of the country."

"I understand that," said Birotteau; "my very best ideas have come to me while lounging about, haven't they, duck?"

"Claparon," resumed Roguin, "makes up during the night for the time spent in hunting out and inventing schemes during the day. All men of great talent lead a queer and inexplicable life. Still, in spite of his irregular ways—I've seen it myself—he gains his ends; he has made all our landholders give in; at first they held back, they suspected something; but Claparon took them in hand, he mystified them, he tired them out, he went to see them every day, and here we are in possession of the lots."

A peculiar *broum! broum!* habitually indulged in by

drinkers of Cognac and other strong liquors, announced the most eccentric personage of this history, and the visible arbiter of César's destiny. The perfumer dashed out into the dark little stair-way, as much to tell Raguet to shut up the shop as to excuse himself to Claparon for receiving him in the dining-room.

"Oh, monsieur!" Claparon replied, "it seems a very good place for putting vegetables down—that is, I mean, for putting figures down."

In spite of Roguin's skilful preparations, Monsieur and Madame Ragon—those well-behaved bourgeois—the observing Pillerault, and Césarine and her mother, were at first rather unfavorably impressed by this pretended highflying banker.

Though only twenty-eight years of age, the ex-commercial traveler did not possess a hair upon his head, but wore a frizzed wig with corkscrew curls. This style of head-dress requires a virgin freshness, a milky transparency of skin, and the most charming feminine graces; it therefore threw out, in ignoble relief, a pimply, reddish-brown face, as highly-colored as that of a stage driver, its precocious wrinkles attesting, by the grimaces of their deep and plaited folds, the libertine life he led; his misfortunes were still farther vouched for by the bad state of his teeth and the black dots scattered over his corrugated skin. Claparon looked like a country actor who plays all sorts of parts, and who acts the buffoon at the door to attract a crowd, and upon whose cheek rouge will no longer stick; a man worn out by his labors, with sticky lips, but a nimble tongue, even in intoxication. A face like this, lighted up by the joyous fires of punch, was inconsistent with the gravity of business. Claparon had been obliged, therefore, to resort to long mimetic studies, before being able to get up a demeanor in har-

mony with his assumed importance. Du Tillet had been present at Claparon's toilet, like the manager of a theatre anxious about the first appearance of his principal actor, for he was afraid that the vulgar habits of this very free-liver might bubble up and burst on the banker's surface.

"Speak as little as possible," he said to him. "A banker never talks; he acts, thinks, meditates, listens and considers. Thus, the more closely to resemble a banker, either say nothing or else say nothings. Extinguish the light of that waggish eye, and make it serious, at the risk of making it stupid. In politics be on the side of the government, and stick to such generalities as these: 'The tax-levy is ponderous. There is no compromise possible between the two parties. The liberals are dangerous. The Bourbons should avoid a struggle. Liberalism is the cloak of various concurrent interests. The Bourbons are preparing us an era of prosperity; let us support them, even if we don't love them. France has been through enough political experiments,' etc. Don't sit down on the tables, remember that you are to maintain the dignity of a millionaire. Don't snuff up your snuff like a wooden-legged pensioner; play with your tobacco-box, look at your feet often, or at the ceiling before you answer a question, in short, look as deep as you can. Above all, get rid of your unfortunate habit of laying hands on things. In society, a banker should appear tired of laying hands on things. Bear in mind that you sit up all night, that figures have blunted your wits, that so many elements, so many studies, are necessary to start the slightest job! Above all, too, abuse the state of business roundly. Business is slow, heavy, tough, snaggy. Don't quit this, and don't go into particulars. Don't drink too much, and don't sing

your Béranger fooleries at table. If you get drunk, you ruin your prospects. Roguin will keep an eye on you ; you are to be with a highly moral company, a set of decent-minded, virtuous bourgeois, so don't frighten them by getting off any of your pot-house principles."

This tirade had produced upon Charles Claparon's mind an effect like that which his new clothes had produced upon his person. This gay and restless personage—hail-fellow-well-met with every body, used to free and easy garments in which his body was no more confined than were his thoughts in his language, now imprisoned in the new suit which the tailor had sent home late, and which, awkward and stiff as a ramrod, he was trying for the first time, as uneasy in his movements as in his expressions, now putting his hand upon a box or bottle, and now as hastily drawing it back, precisely as he stopped midway in a speech—could not fail to strike the observing Pillerault by his laughable incongruity. His red face, his wig and smart corkscrew curls were as inconsistent with his solemn demeanor as were his thoughts with his words. But the simple people who now saw him soon came to regard this constant jarring as an evidence of preoccupation.

"He's so busy," said Roguin.

"His business gives him precious little education," said Madame Ragon to Césarine.

Roguin heard this speech, and put his finger on his lips.

"He is rich, capable, and exceedingly honest," said he, bending over to Madame Ragon.

"We can overlook a good deal in favor of such qualities," said Pillerault to Ragon.

"Let us read the papers before dinner," said Roguin ; "we are alone."

Madame Ragon, Césarine and Constance left the contracting parties, Pillerault, Ragon, César, Roguin and Claparon, to listen to the papers read by Alexander Crottat. César signed, to the order of one of Roguin's clients, a mortgage of forty thousand francs upon his lots and factories in the Faubourg du Temple ; he placed in Roguin's hands Pillerault's check upon the bank, gave, without taking a receipt, the twenty thousand francs which he had on hand, and the one hundred and forty thousand francs in notes made payable to Claparon's order.

"I have no receipt to give you, sir," said Claparon, "you proceed on your part with Monsieur Roguin, as we do on ours. The sellers of the lots will receive their dues at his office, in cash ; I bind myself no farther than to secure you the total of your share with your one hundred and forty thousand francs in notes."

"True," said Pillerault.

"Now, gentlemen, suppose we call the ladies back, for it's cold without them," said Claparon with his eye on Roguin, as if to learn whether the pleasantry was too highly seasoned.

"Ladies, your servant ! Your daughter, doubtless," said Claparon, indicating Césarine, and standing stiffly up before Birotteau ; well, I must say, you do things up scientifically. Not one of the roses that you've distilled can be compared to her, and perhaps it's because you've distilled so many that you succeeded—"

"Upon my word, I'm hungry, and I confess it," said Roguin, interrupting him.

"Well then, we'll dine," said Birotteau.

"We are to dine before a notary," said Claparon, with an important air.

"You do a large business, sir," said Pillerault, purposely taking the seat next to Claparon.

"Oh, exceedingly large," returned the banker; "but business is heavy, snaggy, think of the canals. Oh, the canals! You can't imagine how much trouble the canals give us; and naturally enough. The government wants canals. The need of canals is generally felt in the provinces, and it interests all branches of trade, you see! Rivers, says Pascal, are moving highways. We must have tow-paths, therefore. Now, tow-paths depend on the embankments, for there are terrible gradings and fillings in to be done; gradings concern the poorer classes; from thence come loans which in the end return to the poorer classes! Voltaire says, 'Canals, Canards, Canaille!' But the government has engineers who advise it; it is difficult to get the better of it, unless we have an understanding with it, on account of the Chamber! Ah, sir! the Chamber gives us the greatest possible trouble; it will not understand the political question which is involved in the financial question. There is bad faith on one side or the other. You'll hardly believe it, but—you know the Kellers? Well, François Keller is an orator, he attacks the government on the subject of appropriations, of canals. Having returned home, the rascal meets us with our propositions, considers them favorable, and advises an arrangement with this very same government which he had just attacked so insolently. The interest of the orator and that of the banker are at loggerheads, so we are between two fires! You see now why business is slow and snaggy, we have so many people to satisfy—clerks, chambers, ante-chambers, ministers—"

"Ministers!" said Pillerault, who was determined to penetrate his associate.

"Yes, sir, ministers."

"Then the newspapers were right," said Pillerault.

"There's uncle got into politics;" said Birotteau; "Monsieur Claparon is making himself quite delightful."

"The newspapers are satanic jokers, too," said Claparon. "Sir, the newspapers get everything into a snarl, they are of use to us sometimes, but they give me many sleepless nights; I should prefer to spend them otherwise; in short I have worn out my eyes with reading and ciphering."

"Let us return to the ministers," said Pillerault, who hoped for revelations.

"The exactions of the ministers are purely governmental. But what is this that I am eating, ambrosia?" said Claparon, interrupting himself. "Impossible to meet such a sauce as this except in a private house; out of the question at a grub-shop."

At this word, the flowers in Madame Ragon's cap skipped like so many lambs. Claparon inferred that the expression was a revolting one, and attempted a correction.

"In upper financial circles," he said, "we call the most elegant cafés, such as Very's, Les Frères Provençaux, grub-shops. Well, I was going on to say that neither these grub-shops, nor the most scientific cooks, ever give you really smooth gravy; some give you clear water acidulated with lemon juice; others, instead of being cooks, are chemists."

The entire dinner passed in attacks on the part of Pillerault, who was anxious to sound the financier, but who found nothing but a vacuum. He considered him, therefore, a dangerous man.

"All's well," said Roguin in Claparon's ear.

"Ah! I hope I can undress to-night," returned Claparon, well nigh suffocated.

"Sir," said Birotteau to him, "we have been obliged, you see, to make a parlor of the dining-room; the reason of this is that we get together a few friends, some eighteen days hence, as much to celebrate the evacuation of the territory—"

"Well said, sir; I am a government man, too. In my opinions I belong to the *Statu Quo* of the great man who governs the destinies of the house of Austria; there's a glorious blade for you! Retain, in order to acquire, and above all, acquire, in order to retain! That's the substance of my views, which have the honor to be those of Prince Metternich."

"—As to commemorate my admission into the order of the Legion of Honor," resumed César.

"Oh, yes, I remember. Who was it that told me of it? The Kellers or Nucingen?"

Roguin, astonished at this display of assurance, made a gesture of admiration.

"Dear me, no, it was at the Chamber."

"At the Chamber, through M. de la Billardière?" added César.

"Exactly."

"A delightful man," said César to his uncle.

"He lets off a quantity of words, words, words," said Pillerault, "enough to drown you in."

"I perhaps rendered myself worthy of this favor—" Birotteau began.

"By your labors in the perfumery way? Yes, the Bourbons are glad to recompense every species of merit. Ah! let us hold fast to these generous legitimate princes, to whom we are to be indebted for unexampled prosperity. For, be assured, the Restoration feels

that it has a tilt to run against the Empire ; it will win triumphs in the midst of peace, triumphs that you shall see."

"You will doubtless do us the honor of attending our ball, sir," said Madame César.

"To pass an evening with you, madame, I would abandon the certainty of millions."

"Yes, he is rather glib," said César to his uncle.

While the glory of perfumery, thus hastening to its fall, was about to emit its last rays, a star was feebly rising upon the commercial horizon. Little Popinot was laying, at this very hour, the foundations of his fortune in the Rue des Cinq Diamants. One end of this street, a narrow thoroughfare through which loaded wagons can with difficulty pass, runs into the Rue des Lombards, and the other into the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, opposite the Rue Quincampoix, that illustrious street of old Paris, so many of whose streets the history of France has made illustrious. In spite of this disadvantage, the consolidation of the dealers in drugs made the street a favorable situation, and in this point of view, Popinot's choice was a happy one. The house, the second from the Rue des Lombards, was so dark that in certain weather artificial light became necessary at mid-day. The young beginner had taken possession, the evening of the day before, of the place, which was in the most dirty and disgusting state. His predecessor, who dealt in molasses and unrefined sugar, had left indelible marks of his trade upon the walls, in the yard and in the ware-rooms. Imagine a spacious apartment, with heavy doors, ironed and painted bottle-green ; the long iron bars being plainly visible and ornamented with nails with heads like mushrooms ; a trellis-worked wire grating, increasing in size toward the base, like those of the previous genera-

tion of bakers; and lastly, with a floor laid in large white flags, the greater part of them broken, the walls being bare and yellow as those of a station-house. Behind, was a back-shop and a kitchen, lighted by the yard; finally, a second store-room in the rear, which seemed to have lately served as a stable. An interior staircase pierced in the back-shop, led to two chambers fronting on the street; in these Popinot intended to place his office, his accountant's desk, and his books.

Over the warerooms, were three narrow chambers built against the party-wall, and looking upon the court; in these he proposed to lodge. They were in a mouldering state, and had no other view than that of a dark, irregular yard, the walls of which, in the dryest weather, were so moist that they looked as if they had been freshly whitewashed; the stones were stuck together by a black and offensive mud—the deposit of the molasses and raw sugar. Only one of these rooms had a fire-place, none of them were papered, and all had tiled floors. Ever since morning, Gaudissart and Popinot, with the aid of a journeyman paper-hanger, whom the commercial traveler had unearthed, had been ornamenting this wretched room with paper at fifteen sous a roll, the journeyman having first smeared the walls with paste. A school-boy's mattress in a cheap pine wood bed, a rickety night-table, an antiquated bureau, a table, two-arm chairs, and six armless ones, composed the entire furniture. Gaudissart had enlivened the mantle-piece by a miserable second-hand looking-glass. Towards eight in the evening, seated before the fire-place in which glowed a blazing faggot, the two friends were about to attack the remains of their breakfast.

"Away with that cold mutton! It's not fit for a house-warming," cried Gaudissart.

"But," said Popinot, showing his last twenty-franc piece, which he kept to pay for the prospectus, "I—"

"Well, I have," retorted Gaudissart, putting a forty-franc piece upon his closed eye-lid.

A hammering at the knocker now resounded through the court, of course naturally solitary and sonorous on Sunday, when the laborers are absent and work-shops abandoned.

"Behold, 'tis the incorruptible from the Rue de la Poterie," said the illustrious Gaudissart.

And a waiter, followed by two scullions, entered, bringing, upon three wooden trays, a dinner and six bottles of carefully selected wine.

"How can we eat all that?" asked Popinot.

"The literary gent is coming!" returned Gaudissart. "Finot understands such pomps and vanities. The simple youth will come with a prospectus of the most preposterous and disheveled sort. The adjective is a happy one, isn't it? Prospectuses are always thirsty. You must water the seed if you want blossoms. Go, slaves," he said to the scullions, striking an attitude; "here is gold for you."

"Thank you, Monsieur Gaudissart," replied the waiters, better pleased with the joke than the money.

"My son," said he to the one who remained to wait upon them, "there is a portress, who lurketh in the depths of a cave where at times she cooketh, as Nausicaa of yore delved in soap-suds, as a simple pastime. Haste thee to her, implore her candor, interest her, young man, in the warmth of these dishes. Tell her that she shall be blessed and especially respected, most respected by Felix Gaudissart, son of Jean-François Gaudissart, grandson of the Gaudissarts, his vile proletarian ancestry. March, and let all be duly ordered,

or I expedite thy movements by a C major on thy seat of honor."

Another knock was heard.

"Here is the witty Andoche," said Gaudissart.

A large, chubby young man of middle height, who from head to foot resembled a hatter's son, with well rounded features where shrewdness was concealed beneath an air of affected gravity, suddenly appeared. His countenance, sad as that of a man worn out by poverty, became radiant at the sight of the table set and the significantly capped bottles. At Gaudissart's exclamation, his pale blue eyes sparkled, his large head, in which his calmuck face was hallowed out, went from right to left, and he saluted Popinot oddly, neither servilely nor respectfully, like one who feels out of place and will make no concession. He began to feel in his heart at this period that he possessed no literary talent; his aim was to remain in literature as a speculator, by getting upon the shoulders of men of ability, by doing literary jobs, rather than making books that would not pay. At this moment, after having exhausted the humility of attempts and the humiliations of trials, he was going, like people of high financial scope, to turn round and become impertinent by rule. But he needed capital to begin with, and Gaudissart had shown him how to obtain it by bringing Popinot's oil properly before the public.

"You will arrange with the newspapers for him, but don't swindle him, or else we shall have a duel; give him his money's worth."

Popinot regarded the author with a troubled air. Your true tradesman considers an author with a sentiment of blended terror, compassion and curiosity. Although Popinot had been well brought up, the habits

of his relatives, their ideas, the stultifying cares of a shop and a cash-book, had modified his intelligence by bending it to the customs and usages of his trade—a phenomenon which you may observe by remarking the metamorphoses undergone in ten years by a hundred fellow-students, who came out of college or boarding-school almost alike. Andoche accepted this alarm as a proof of his profound admiration.

"Suppose we rush the prospectus through before dinner, we can then drink at our ease," said Gaudissart. "A man reads badly after dinner. The tongue is too busy digesting."

"A prospectus, sir," said Popinot, "is often a fortune in itself."

"And for plebeians like me," said Andoche, "fortune is often only a prospectus."

"Capital," said Gaudissart. "This fellow Andoche is as witty as the whole forty."

"As a hundred," said Popinot, stupefied at the idea.

The impatient Gaudissart took the manuscript and read aloud, and with emphasis, "Cephalic Oil!"

"I would prefer Césarean Oil," said Popinot.

"Oh, you do not know the country people," said Gaudissart; "there is a surgical operation that bears that name, and they are so stupid that they would suppose your oil something to facilitate child-bearing; and it would take too much talking to get them from that to the hair."

"Without wishing to defend my title," said the author, "I will merely observe that CEPHALIC OIL means oil for the head, and thus expresses all your ideas."

"Well!" said Popinot, impatiently.

The prospectus, as sent by thousands to the trade even now, is as follows (*Another pièce justificative*) :

GOLD MEDAL FROM THE EXPOSITION OF 1819.

CEPHALIC OIL.

Patents for Invention and Improvement.

No cosmetic can make the hair grow, as no chemical preparation dyes it without danger to the seat of reason. Science has recently declared the hair to be a dead substance, and that no agent can prevent its coming out or turning white. To prevent Xerasy and Calvities, it is simply necessary to preserve the bulb from which it springs from all exterior atmospheric influences, and to maintain the head at a proper degree of warmth. The CEPHALIC OIL, based on principles established by the Academy of Sciences, produces this important result, adhered to by the ancients, the Romans, Greeks, and northern nations, which took pride in having fine hair. Learned researches have shown that the nobles who were formerly distinguished for long hair employed no other means; their method, however, skilfully recovered by A. Popinot, inventor of the Cephalic Oil, had been lost.

To preserve, instead of endeavoring to provoke an impossible or detrimental stimulation on the derm which contains the bulb, is the aim of the CEPHALIC OIL. This oil, in fact, which thwarts the exfoliation of the pellicules, which exhales a sweet odor, and which, by the substances composing it, one of the principal elements of which is essence of nuts, prevents all action of the exterior air on the head, thus prevents colds, catarrhs,

and all painful affections of the encephalon, while leaving it its internal temperature. In this manner the bulb which contains the pulp producing the hair, is never affected by cold or heat. The hair, that magnificent product which men and women so prize, thus preserves, till old age, if you but use the CEPHALIC OIL, that gloss, that silkiness, that lustre, which renders the hair of childhood so charming.

THE METHOD OF USING IT is detailed upon the wrapper accompanying each bottle.

METHOD OF USING THE CEPHALIC OIL.

It is perfectly useless to anoint the hair; it is not only a ridiculous custom, but a troublesome habit, as cosmetics will leave their traces. It suffices every morning to dip a small fine sponge in the oil, to part the hair with a comb, and to moisten the hair at the roots, part by part, so that the skin receives a slight layer, after first cleaning the hair with brush and comb.

This oil is sold in bottles, bearing the signature of the inventor, to prevent all counterfeits. Price three francs. A. Popinot, Rue des Cinq Diamants, quartier des Lombards, Paris. Letters must be prepaid.

NOTE.—The establishment of A. Popinot keeps also druggists' oils, such as orange flower oil, lavender oil, sweet almond oil, cacao oil, coffee oil, castor oil, etc.

"My dear sir," said the illustrious Gaudissart to Finot, "it is perfect. How we plunge at once into science! No twisting, straight to the point! I compliment you sincerely. This is truly useful literature."

"Beautiful, indeed," said Popinot, enthusiastically.

"A prospectus, the first word of which kills Macassar," said Gaudissart, rising with a magisterial air to

utter the following words, which he scanned with parliamentary gestures. "You—can—not—make—the—hair—grow! You—can—not—dye—it—without—danger! There lies the success. Modern science agrees with ancient habits. You are ready for both old and young. Suppose you have to deal with an old man. 'Ah, sir,' you say, 'the ancients, the Greeks and Romans were right, and were not as dull as some of us think.' Do you meet a young man? 'My dear boy,' you exclaim, 'another discovery due to the progress of the age, we *are* progressing. What may we not expect from steam, telegraphs, and so on! This oil is the result of a report by Monsieur Vauquelin!' Suppose we were to print a passage from this report to the Academy of Sciences, confirming our assertions? Bravo! Come, sit down, Finot! Let us champ the hay and gulp the champagne to the success of our estimable friend!"

"I thought," said the author, modestly, "that light and playful announcements have had their day; we are entering a scientific period, you need a doctoral air and a tone of authority, to impose on the public."

"We will warm up that oil; my feet itch, and so does my tongue. I have the commissions of all the hair dressers, not one gives over thirty per cent.; we must give forty, and I guarantee a hundred thousand bottles in six months. I will attack the apothecaries, the grocers, the hair dressers, and giving them forty per cent. off, they will all throw dust in the eyes of their customers."

The three young men eat like lions, drank like Swiss, and got tipsy on the future success of the oil.

"This oil goes to the head," said Finot, smiling.

Gaudissart exhausted the different series of puns on

the words oil, hair, head, etc. Amid the laughter of the three friends, at dessert, in spite of the noisy reciprocal toasts and wishes of good luck, the knocker sounded and was heard.

"It is my uncle! he is the very man to come to see me," cried Popinot.

"An uncle?" said Finot, "and we haven't got a glass for him!"

"My friend, Popinot's uncle is an examining judge," said Gaudissart to Finot. "We must not mystify him, he saved my life. I tell you, when a man has been in such a corner as I was, with the scaffold staring him in the face, with its 'Couic, and good-bye to your hair!'" said he, imitating the fatal knife by a gesture, "he is apt to remember the virtuous magistrate to whom he is indebted for the preservation of the gullet down which the champagne floweth! You could not help remembering him were you dead drunk. You know not, Finot, whether you may not need Monsieur Popinot yourself. We must receive him with all the honors."

The virtuous examining judge was in fact asking the portress for his nephew. Recognizing the voice, Anselme went down, candle in hand, to light the way.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," said the magistrate.

The illustrious Gaudissart bowed low. Finot looked at the judge with tipsy eyes, and thought him passably thick-witted.

"There is nothing luxurious here," said the judge, gravely, looking around the room; "but, my boy, if a man wants to rise, he must begin low."

"What a profound man!" said Gaudissart to Finot.

"An article idea," said the journalist.

"Ah! you there, sir?" said the judge, recognising the commercial traveler. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm trying, sir, to contribute my little means to your nephew's fortune. We have just been discussing the prospectus of his oil, and in this gentleman you have the author of the prospectus, which seems to us one of the finest specimens of wig literature." The Judge looked at Finot. "Monsieur Andoche Finot," said Gaudissart, "one of the most distinguished literary young men, who does up high politics and the small theatres in the government journals, a minister in training for authorship."

Finot pulled Gaudissart by the lapel of his coat.

"That's well, my boys," said the Judge, to whom these words explained the condition of the table, which exhibited remains of a most excusable treat. "Please to dress, nephew," said the Judge to Popinot, "we must go this evening to see Monsieur Birotteau, as I owe him a visit. You will sign the articles of partnership, which I have carefully examined. As you will have your oil-factory on the grounds of the Faubourg du Temple, I think he should give you a lease of the buildings. He may have assignees. A clear understanding prevents a misunderstanding. These walls seem to me to be damp, Anselme, you'd better hang mats around your bed."

"Excuse me, Judge," said Gaudissart with the wheedling of a courtier, ".we pasted up the paper to-day ourselves, and—it—is not—dry."

"Economy ; very good," said the Judge.

"Hark ye," whispered Gaudissart to Finot, "my friend, Popinot is a virtuous young man, he is going to his uncle's, suppose we go and have a high old time ?"

The journalist exhibited the lining of his vest pocket. Popinot saw the gesture and slily gave the author of the prospectus twenty francs. The Judge had a coach

at the end of the street and he took his nephew to Birotteau's. Pillerault, M. and Madame Ragon and Roguin were playing boston, and Césarine was embroidering a neckerchief when Judge Popinot and Anselme appeared. Roguin, the partner of Madame Ragon, by whom Césarine sat, remarked her pleased look when she saw Anselme come in, and pointed her out, blushing scarlet, to his head clerk.

"This is a great day for law-papers," said the perfumer, when the Judge, after the usual greetings, told him his errand.

César, Anselme and the Judge went up-stairs, to the perfumer's temporary room, to discuss the lease and the articles of partnership drawn up by the magistrate. The lease was made out for eighteen years to make it tally with that of the house in the Rue des Cinq Diamants, a trifle, apparently, but one which subsequently served Birotteau's interests. When César and the Judge returned to the entre-sol, the magistrate, astonished at the general confusion and the presence of workmen on Sunday at the house of a man as religious as the perfumer, asked the reason, and the perfumer was ready with a reply.

"Although you are not worldly, sir, you will not object to our celebrating the deliverance of the territory. That is not all. If I assemble a few friends, it is also to commemorate my admission into the order of the Legion of Honor."

"Ah!" said the Judge, who was not a member.

"Perhaps I deserved this distinguished and royal favor by sitting in the consular tribunal and fighting for the Bourbons on the steps—"

"Yes," said the Judge.

"Of St. Roch, the 13th Vendémiaire, where I was wounded by Napoleon."

"Of course," said the Judge. "If my wife is not indisposed, I will bring her."

"Xandrot," said Roguin as he stepped out of the door, to his clerk, "do not think for a moment of marrying Césarine, and in six weeks you will see that the counsel was a good one."

"Why ?" said Crottat.

"Birotteau, my dear fellow, is going to spend a hundred thousand francs for his ball, he risks his fortune in this affair of the lands in spite of my advice. In six weeks these people will be without bread. Marry Mademoiselle Lourdois, the house-painter's daughter, she has three hundred thousand francs dowry. I kept this resource in pickle for you. If you'll pay me down one hundred thousand francs for my office, you can have it to-morrow."

The magnificence of the ball to be given by the perfumer, announced by the newspapers to Europe, was quite differently announced in business circles by the rumors which the work upon the house prosecuted day and night engendered. Here it was said that César had hired three houses ; there that he was gilding his salons ; in the next place that the supper would exhibit dishes invented for the occasion ; here it was asserted that tradespeople were not to be invited, the ball being given for government gentry exclusively ; there, the perfumer was severely censured for his ambition, and laughed at for his political pretensions ; and some even went so far as to deny his wound ! The ball gave rise to more than one intrigue in the second ward ; there friends gave them no trouble, but the demands of mere acquaintances were enormous. Favor always produces courtiers.

There were many whose invitations were procured by stratagem. The Birotteaus were alarmed at this host of friends that they did not know. Their eagerness terrified Madame Birotteau, her manner became daily more gloomy as the solemnity approached. At first, she avowed to César that she did not know what face to put on ; she shrank from the numberless details of such a festival ; where could she get the silver, glass, refreshments, dishes, the service necessary ? And who would superintend it all ? She begged Birotteau to stand at the door and let no one in but those invited. She had heard strange stories told of people who came to balls, referring to friends whom they could not name.

When, ten days before the fête, Braschon, Grindot, Lourdois and Chaffaroux, the contractor, vowed that the apartments would be ready for the famous 17th of December, there was a laughable conference in the evening after dinner in the modest little room on the ground floor, between César, his wife and daughter, upon the subject of the list of guests and the sending of the invitations, which a printer had that morning brought in, printed in beautiful script on rose-colored paper, and executed strictly according to the formula in such cases made and provided.

" Let us leave no one out," said Birotteau.

" If we forget anyone," said Constance, " he will not forget it himself. Madame Derville, who never paid us a visit before, arrived last evening with all possible splutter."

" She is very pretty," said Césarine, " I liked her."

" Before she was married, though, she was even below me," said Constance, " she sewed for a living in the Rue Montmartre. She has made shirts for your father."

" Well, let me begin the list," said Birotteau, " by the

biggest folks. Put down the Duke and Duchess de Lenoncourt, Césarine."

"Good heavens! César," said Constance, "do not send a single invitation to people whom you know only as customers. Are you going to invite the Princess de Blamont-Chauvry, still more closely related to your late godmother, the marchioness d'Uxelles, than the Duke de Lenoncourt? Would you invite the two Messieurs de Vandenesse, M. de Marsay, M. de Ronquerolles, M. d'Aiglemont—in a word, your customers? You are crazy, your grandeur is too much for you."

"Yes, but the Count de Fontaine and his family! Remember how he used to come under the name of Grand Jacques, with Le Gars, who was the Marquis de Montauran, and M. de la Billardière, who was called Le Nantais, to the Queen of Roses, before the great affair of the 13th Vendémiaire. What shakings of hands there were then! 'Courage, Birotteau,' they said, 'die like us for the good cause!' We are old fellow-conspirators."

"Put him down," said Constance. "If M. de la Billardière and his son come, they must have some one to talk to."

"Césarine," said Birotteau, "put down, first, the Prefect of the Seine; he will come or stay away, but he commands the municipal body. Honor to whom honor is due. M. de la Billardière and his son, mayor. Put the number of the guests at the end of each line. My colleague, M. Granet, the deputy, and his wife. She is very ugly, but no matter, we cannot omit her! M. Curel, the goldsmith, Colonel in the National Guard, his wife and two daughters. These are what I call the authorities. Now for the big bugs. The Count and

Countess de Fontaine, and their daughter, M'lle Emilie de Fontaine."

"A saucy creature that makes me go out on the sidewalk to take her orders from the carriage in all weathers," said Madame César. "If she comes, it will only be to laugh at us."

"Then perhaps she will come," said César, who was determined to have a crowd.

"Go on, Césarine. The Count and Countess de Granville, my landlord, the most famous noddle in the royal court, Derville says. By the way, Monsieur de la Billardière is to have me received as Knight to-morrow, by the Count de Lacépède himself. We must send an invitation for the ball and dinner to the Grand Chancellor. Put Monsieur Vauquelin down for ball and dinner, Césarine. And, not to forget them, all the Chiffrevilles and Protez; Monsieur and Madame Popinot, Judge of the Tribunal de la Seine, Monsieur and Madame Thirion, usher in the king's cabinet, friends of the Ragons and their daughter, who is going, they say, to marry one of Monsieur Camusot's sons by his first wife."

"César, do not forget little Horace Bianchon, Popinot's nephew and Anselme's cousin," said Constance.

"Ah, the rogue! Césarine has put a four at the end of the Popinots. Monsieur and Madame Rabourdin, head of the office, in the division of Monsieur de la Billardière. Monsieur Cochin of the same department his wife and son, the silent partners of the Matifats, and Monsieur, Madame and M'lle Matifat, while we are about it."

"The Matifats," said Césarine, "have put in a word for Monsieur and Madame Colleville, Monsieur and Madame Thuillier, their friends, and the Saillards."

"We shall see," said César. "Our broker, Monsieur and Madame Jules Desmarets."

"She will be the belle of the ball," said Césarine; "I like her, oh, more than anybody else."

"Derville and his wife."

"Pray put down Monsieur and Madame Coquelin, successors to my uncle Pillerault," said Constance. "They so count on it, that the poor little woman is having a superb ball dress made at my dressmakers; a white satin under skirt, and a tulle over-dress, embroidered with chicory flowers. She came within an ace of getting a gold plated robe, as if she were going to court. If we miss them, they are our enemies for life."

"Very well, Césarine, we must honor trade, we belong to it ourselves. Monsieur and Madame Roguin."

"Mamma, Madame Roguin will wear her necklace, all her diamonds, and her dress trimmed with mechlin"

"Monsieur and Madame Lebas," said César. "Then the President of the Tribunal of Commerce, his wife, and two daughters. I forgot them among the authorities. Monsieur and Madame Lourdois, and their daughter. Monsieur Claparon, the banker, Monsieur du Tillet, Monsieur Grindot, Monsieur Molineux, Pillerault and his landlord, Monsieur and Madame Camusot, the rich silk mercers, with all their children, the one in the Polytechnic School, and the lawyer. He is going to be made judge on account of his marriage with Mademoiselle Thirion."

"Yes, but out in the country," said Césarine.

"Monsieur Cardot, Camusot's father-in-law, and all the Cardot children. Wait! and the Guillaumes, Rue du Colombier, Lebas' father-in-law, two old people who will be capital wall flowers; Alexander Crottat,—Celestin—"

"Papa, don't forget Monsieur Andoche Finot, and Monsieur Gaudissart, two young men who are very useful to Anselme."

"Gaudissart? He has been in prison. But, no matter, he starts, in a few days, to travel for our oil. As for Andoche Finot, what is he to us?"

"Monsieur Anselme says he will be a great man. He is as talented as Voltaire."

"An author? Atheists, every one of them."

"Put him down, papa. We have very few dancers, so far. What is more, he wrote the beautiful prospectus of your oil."

"He believes in our oil, does he?" said César, "put him down, my child."

"I put *my* protégés down, too," said Césarine.

"Put down Monsieur Mitral, my sheriff; Monsieur Haudry, our physician, for form's sake, he won't come."

"He will come to play cards," said Césarine.

"I hope, César, that you will invite the Abbé Loraux to the dinner."

"I have already written to him," said César.

"Oh! don't forget Lebas' sister-in-law, Madame Augustine de Sommervieux," said Césarine. "Poor little woman, she is very unhappy, she is dying of chagrin, Lebas told us."

"So much for marrying an artist," said the perfumer. "There," he whispered to his daughter, "look how your mother is nodding. Good-evening, Madame César."

"Well!" said César to Césarine, "tell me about your mother's dress."

"It will be ready in time. Mamma thinks she is only going to have a Canton crape dress like mine; the dressmaker is sure of getting a fit without trying it on."

"How many people have we in all?" said César aloud, seeing his wife open her eyelids.

"One hundred and nine, with the clerks," said Césarine.

"Where shall we put them all?" said Madame Birotteau. "Well," she continued, naïvely, "after Sunday comes a Monday, that's one comfort."

Nothing can be done with simplicity by persons who are ascending from one social stage to another. Neither Madame Birotteau, nor César, nor any one, could under, any pretext, enter the second story. César had promised Raguet, his shop-boy, a new suit the day of the ball, if he kept strict watch and was a good sentinel. Birotteau, like the Emperor Napoleon at Compiègne, when restoring the Château for his marriage with Marie Louise, would look at nothing while it was unfinished, he desired to enjoy a surprise. These two old adversaries met once again, unwittingly, not on a battle field, but on the field of private vanity. Monsieur Grindot took César by the hand to show him the rooms, as a cicerone exhibits a gallery. Besides this, every one in the house had invented a surprise. Césarine had dutifully employed her little all, a hundred louis, in buying books for her father. Monsieur Grindot had one morning told her in confidence that there would be two book cases in her father's chamber, which formed a cabinet, the architect's surprise. Césarine had placed all her girl's savings on a book-seller's counter, to offer her father the following works: Bossuet, Racine, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Molière, Buffon, Fénelon, Delille, Bernardin de Saint Pierre, La Fontaine, Corneille, Pascal, La Harpe, in a word, that ordinary library found every where, and which her father would never read. There must have been a ter-

rible bill for binding. The celebrated but unpunctual binder Thouvenin had promised to deliver the volumes on the 16th at noon. Césarine had told her uncle Pillerault of her embarrassment, and he had undertaken to pay the bill. César's surprise for his wife was a cherry colored velvet dress, trimmed with lace, about which he had just been speaking to his daughter, his accomplice. Madame Birotteau's surprise for the new Knight consisted in a pair of gold buckles and a diamond pin. Finally, there was, for all the family, the surprise of the new suite of rooms, to be followed within a fortnight by the great surprise of the bills therefor.

César held deep counsel within himself as to what invitations were to be made in person, and what carried by Raguet in the evening. He took a hack, crammed in his wife, a perfect fright with her plumed hat and the last shawl given her, the cashmere she had been longing for the past fifteen years. The perfumers, in full dress, made twenty-two visits in a single morning.

César had spared his wife the difficulties presented by the preparation of the different eatables required by the splendor of the entertainment. A diplomatic treaty had been made between the illustrious Chevet and Birotteau. Chevet furnished a superb set of silver, as profitable an investment as a house to let ; he furnished the dinner, the wine, the waiters, commanded by a chief of suitable appearance, all of them responsible for their several doings. Chevet required the kitchen and the dining-room on the first floor for his head-quarters ; it would take him every moment of the time to serve up a dinner for twenty at six o'clock, and a magnificent supper at one in the morning. Birotteau made an arrangement with the café de Foy for the ices in the form of fruit, served upon handsome cups, with plated spoons

and silver trays. Tanrade, another man of eminence, was to furnish the liquids.

"Don't be afraid," said César to his wife, on seeing her a little uneasy the day but one before, "Chevet, Tanrade and the café de Foy will occupy the entre-sol, Virginie will guard the second story, the shop will be closed. We shall have nothing to do but to take up our stand in the first."

The 16th, at two o'clock, Monsieur de la Billardière called to conduct César to the Hotel of the Legion of Honor, where he was to be received Knight by the Count de Lacépède, with ten other candidates. The mayor found the perfumer with tears in his eyes. Constance had just surprised him with the gold buckles and pin.

"It is delightful to be so loved," said he on entering the carriage before his assembled clerks, Césarine and Constance. They all gazed at César in his black silk small clothes, silk stockings and new blue coat, on which was to shine the ribbon, that, according to Molineux, had been dipped in blood. When César came back to dinner, he was pale with joy ; he looked at his cross in every mirror, for in his first intoxication he was not content with the ribbon ; he was openly proud of it and had no false shame.

"Wife," said he, "the Grand Chancellor is a charming man ; upon a single word from la Billardière, he accepted my invitation. He is coming with Monsieur Vauquelin. Monsieur de Lacépède is a great man, yes, as great as Vauquelin ; he has written forty volumes ! But though an author he is a peer of France. Do not forget to address him thus : Your Lordship, or My Lord Count."

"But do eat," said his wife. "Your father is no better than a child," she added to Césarine.

"How well it looks in your button-hole," said Césarine. "They will present arms to you ; oh, I will go out with you often."

"They will present arms wherever there are sentinels."

At that moment Grindot came down with Braschon. After dinner, Monsieur, Madame and Mademoiselle, might enjoy a look at the apartments, Braschon's foreman had just finished nailing up some brackets, and three men were lighting the tapers.

"You want one hundred and twenty tapers," said Braschon.

"There's a bill of two hundred francs at Trudon's," said Madame César, whose murmur was checked by a look from the Chevalier Birotteau.

"Your ball will be magnificent, chevalier," said Braschon.

Birotteau said to himself, "Flatterers already ! The Abbé Loraux warned me not to fall into their snares, and to remain humble. I will remember my origin."

César did not see what the rich upholsterer of the Rue St. Antoine was driving at. Braschon made eleven ineffectual attempts to get an invitation for self, wife, daughter, mother-in-law and aunt. Braschon became Birotteau's enemy. To the very sill of the door he kept calling him chevalier. The general review began. César, his wife and Césarine went out by the shop door and came in from the street. The front door had been made over in grand style, with two leaves, divided into equal square panels, with a painted cast-iron architectural ornament in the centre of each. This style of door, since so common in Paris, was then just introduced. At the end of the vestibule was a staircase divided into two straight

flight between which was the socle that had so troubled Birotteau, and which formed a kind of box where an old woman might easily lodge. This vestibule, floored in white and black marble, and painted in imitation of marble, was lighted by an antique lamp with four jets. The architect had blended richness and simplicity. A narrow red carpet relieved the whiteness of the steps of the staircase which were made of limestone and polished with pumice. The first landing-place opened into the entre-sol. The door was like that on the street, but of wood-work.

"Charming!" said Césarine. "And yet there is nothing that forcibly strikes the eye."

"Precisely, Mademoiselle, the charm is produced by the exact proportions between the stylobates, the plinths, the cornices and the ornaments; besides, I have put on no gilding, the colors are subdued and have no decided tone."

"It is quite a science," said Césarine.

They now all entered a tasty, spacious and simply-decorated ante-chamber, the floor of which was inlaid. Then came a red and white salon with three windows on the street, with elegantly-profiled cornices; it was exquisitely and unostentatiously painted. On a marble mantelpiece supported by columns was a tastefully selected set of ornaments, with nothing to excite a smile, as it was in perfect keeping with the other details. That subtle harmony which artists alone can produce, by following up a system of decoration even to the minutest accessories, and which the ignorant cannot comprehend, though they feel it, everywhere prevailed. A chandelier with twenty-four wax lights brought out the red silk drapery, and the seductive floor almost pro-

voked Césarine to dance. A green and white boudoir led into César's cabinet.

"I have put a bed here," said Grindot, as he opened the doors of an alcove skilfully concealed between the two book-cases. "You or Madame may be sick and then each has a room."

"But these book-cases full of bound books! Oh! wife, wife," said César.

"No, that is Césarine's surprise."

"Pardon a father's emotion," said he to the architect, as he embraced his daughter.

"Never mind, my dear sir," said Grindot, "you are in your own house, you know."

In this cabinet brown predominated, relieved by green, for the most skilful and harmonious transitions united all the rooms in one whole. Thus the ground of one room was the ornament in the next and vice versa. In a panel in César's cabinet was the engraving of Hero and Leander.

"This beautiful picture is the gift of Anselme," said Césarine.

Anselme too had ventured on a surprise.

"The poor boy has done for me what I did for Monsieur Vauquelin."

Then came Madame Birotteau's room. There the architect had displayed a magnificence sure to please the good folks he desired to captivate, for he had kept his word in studying this decoration. The chamber was hung with blue silk, trimmed with white, the furniture was white cassimere with a blue figure. The clock on the white marble mantel represented Venus leaning over a superb block of marble; a pretty Turkish carpet led to Césarine's room, which was hung with chintz and was very pretty; here were a piano, a handsome

wardrobe with mirror front, a neat little bed with simple curtains, and all the little articles that young girls like. The dining-room was off Birotteau's chamber and his wife's and was entered from the stairs. It had been treated in the style of Louis Quatorze with a Boulle clock, sideboards make of tortoise shell and brass, and the walls lined with cloth and gilt nails. The joy of the three was indescribable, especially when Madame Birotteau, returning to her room, found on her bed the cherry-colored velvet dress trimmed with lace, her husband's present, which Virginie had brought in on tiptoe.

"This room, sir, will do you great honor," said Constance to Grindot. "We shall have a hundred and odd persons here to-morrow night, and you will be in every body's mouth."

"I shall recommend you," said César. "You will see the grandees of trade and you will be better known in one evening than if you had built a hundred houses."

Constance, deeply moved, thought no more of the expense, nor did she find fault with her husband. Anselme Popinot, of whose intelligence she had a high opinion, had, when he brought Hero and Leander in the morning, assured her of the success of the Cephalic Oil, at which he was working like a beaver. The lover promised, in spite of the sum that Birotteau's follies would cost, to cover the expense in six months by the profit on his share of the oil. After trembling for nineteen years, it was so delightful to give one day to joy, that Constance promised her daughter not to mar her husband's happiness by any reflection, and to give herself unreservedly up to pleasure. When Monsieur Grindot left them at about eleven o'clock, she fell on her husband's neck and shed tears of happiness, saying: "Ah, César, you make me very wild and very happy."

"If it lasts, you mean," returned César, smiling.

"It will last, I have no fear," said Madame Birotteau.

"So you appreciate me at last," said the perfumer.

People great enough to confess their weaknesses will acknowledge that a poor orphan girl, who, eighteen years before, was head saleswoman at the Sailor Boy in the Ile St. Louis, and a poor peasant, who came from Touraine to Paris, with a staff and hob-nailed shoes, might well be flattered and happy, to give such an entertainment for so laudable a motive.

"I would give a hundred francs," said César, "if somebody would call in."

"The Abbé Loraux!" said Virginie.

The Abbé Loraux appeared. This priest was then vicar of Saint Sulpice. Never was the power of the soul better displayed than in this good man, whose conversation left a deep impression on the minds of all who knew him. His grim face, the very ugliness of which was almost enough to repel confidence, had been rendered sublime by the exercise of the Catholic virtues; an anticipatory light from heaven illumined it. An inborn candor relieved his uncouth features, and the fire of charity purified the distorted lines by a phenomenon the reverse of that which had animalized and degraded everything in Claparon. In his very wrinkles disported the graces of the three fair human virtues, Hope, Faith, and Charity. His words were mild, slow, penetrating. His costume was that of the Parisian priests, with a chestnut brown frock. No ambition had insinuated itself into his pure heart, which the angels would one day present to God in all its baptismal innocence. It had required the gentle violence of the daughter of Louis XVI to induce Abbé Loraux to accept a Parisian parish, though one of the poorest. He beheld

all these sumptuosities with a troubled eye, smiled at the three enchanted tradesfolk, and shook his whitened head.

"My children, my business is not to attend parties of pleasure, but to comfort the afflicted. I come to thank Monsieur César, to felicitate you all. I will come here only to one party—this dear child's wedding."

A quarter of an hour afterwards the Abbé retired, without the perfumer or his wife daring to show him the apartments. This grave apparition dashed a few icy drops into César's bubbling joy. They lay down to sleep in their luxury, each taking possession of the pretty and long-coveted articles. Césarine undressed her mother before a marble top toilet table. César had treated himself to some superfluities which he wished to use instanter. All slept, rehearsing in advance the morrow's joys. After going to mass and reading their vespers, Césarine and her mother dressed at four o'clock, after giving up the entre-sol to the secular arm of Chevet's people. Never did dress so become Madame César as that cherry-colored velvet robe, with short sleeves trimmed with lace; her beautiful arms, still fresh and young, her bust of sparkling white, her neck and well rounded shoulders, were heightened in effect by the richness of the stuff and the magnificence of the color. The simple joy that every woman feels to see herself in all her power, gave an indescribable softness to the Greek profile of the perfumer's wife, whose beauty appeared in all its cameo fineness. Césarine, attired in white crape, had a wreath of white roses on her head, a rose in her girdle; a scarf modestly covered her shoulders and bust; she set poor Popinot crazy.

"These people crush us," said Madame Roguin to her husband, as they went through the rooms.

The notary's wife was enraged because she was not as beautiful as Madame César, for every woman instinctively knows whether a rival's beauty is inferior or superior to her own.

"Bah! this will not last long, and you will soon splash the poor woman as she trudges along the street on foot, ruined!" whispered Roguin to his wife.

Vauquelin was perfectly delightful; he came with Monsieur de Lacépède, his colleague in the Institute, who went for him in a carriage. On seeing the radiant hostess, the two savants fell into an ecstasy of scientific compliments.

"Madame," said the chemist, "you possess a secret unknown to science, to remain thus young and beautiful!"

"You are somewhat at home here," said Birotteau to the academician. "Yes, my Lord Count," he resumed, turning to the Chancellor of the Legion of Honor, "I owe all my fortune to Monsieur Vauquelin. I have the honor to present to your Lordship the President of the Tribunal of Commerce. This is the Count de Lacépède, peer of France, one of France's great men; he has written forty volumes," said he to Joseph Lebas, who accompanied the President of the Tribunal.

The guests were punctual. The dinner was what tradesfolk's dinners usually are, extremely gay, overflowing with good-fellowship, interlarded with coarse pleasantries which always excite a laugh. The excellence of the viands, the superiority of the wines, were appreciated. When the company returned to the salon to take their coffee, it was half past nine. Carriages had already brought several young ladies impatient for the dance. An hour later, the salon was full and the ball had the air of a rout. Monsieur de Lacépède and

Monsieur Vauquelin left, to the great despair of Birotteau, who followed them to the staircase, begging them to remain, but in vain. He succeeded in keeping Judge Popinot and Monsieur de la Billardière. With the exception of three ladies who represented the aristocracy, the finances and the administration, Mademoiselle de Fontaine, Madame Jules and Madame Rabourdin, whose striking beauty, dress and manners stood out amid the assembly, the other women, with their heavy, solid toilet presented that indescribable dowdiness to the eye which gives the bourgeois the common air which is inseparable from them, and to which the grace of these three ladies offered so cruel a contrast.

The bourgeoisie of the Rue Saint Denis displayed itself in all its majesty, exhibiting and enjoying to the full its right to be extremely ridiculous. There was no mistaking it ; it was impossible not to recognize the class which dresses its children in the uniform of Lancers or the National Guard, which buys "Victoires et Conquêtes" and "Le Soldat Laboureur," admires the painting of "The Poor Man's Funeral," makes a holiday of the day when it is summoned to mount guard, goes on Sunday to a country house of its own, is anxious to appear distingué, and aspires to municipal honors ; the class which, though always jealous and envious, is nevertheless kind and willing to do a service, is attached, sensitive, compassionate ; which subscribes for the children of General Foy, for the Greeks, in ignorance of their piracies, and for the French Colony in Texas at the time when it had ceased to exist ; which is the dupe of its own virtues, is ridiculed for its foibles by a class far from being its equal, as its good qualities come precisely from its ignorance of the amenities of life ; that virtuous class which brings up its ingenuous daughters accustomed to labor,

girls whose steady habits fall off upon their coming in contact with the classes above them, and from among whom, though destitute of native wit, master Chrysale would have chosen his wife—a class, in short, admirably represented by the Matifats, the wholesale druggists of the Rue des Lombards, who had furnished the Queen of Roses for the last sixty years.

Madame Matifat, who had sought to give herself an imposing air, danced in a turban and was dressed in a heavy cherry-colored gown striped with gold—a toilet quite in harmony with her lofty manners, her Roman nose, and the splendors of a crimson complexion ; Monsieur Matifat, so superb at a review of the National Guard, where the beholder could see at fifty paces the rotund paunch upon which glittered his watch chain and his bunch of charms, was domineered over by this Catherine II of the counter. He was stout and short, sported an absurdly pompous pair of spectacles, and wore his shirt collar very high in his neck ; he was generally remarked by the depth of his voice and the richness of his vocabulary. He never said "Corneille," but "the sublime Corneille ;" Racine was "the sweet Racine." Voltaire, "the second in every walk, with more wit than genius, but a man of genius, nevertheless !" Rousseau, with his suspicious disposition, was devoured by pride, and ended by hanging himself.

He had a heavy way of relating the vulgar anecdotes about Piron—who passes for a prodigious creature among the bourgeois. Matifat, who had a great fancy for actors, had also a slight tendency to indecency. Madame Matifat, on seeing him commence a story would often interrupt him, exclaiming, "Take care what you say, fatty." She familiarly called him her fatty. A speech of this voluminous queen of drugs caused

Mademoiselle de Fontaine to lose her aristocratic countenance; the haughty young woman could not restrain a smile at hearing her say to Matifat, "Now don't make a rush at the ices, fatty; it's bad manners."

It is more difficult to explain the difference between fashionable society and the bourgeoisie than it would be for the bourgeoisie to efface it. These women, ill at ease in their clothes, knew that they were dressed in their Sunday best, and innocently manifested a delight which showed that a ball was a rarity in their busy life; while the three ladies, each of whom represented a sphere of society, were then precisely as they expected to be on the morrow; they did not appear to have dressed on purpose, they did not admire themselves in the unusual marvels of their equipment, and felt no anxiety about their effect; when they had given the last touch, before the glass, to their ball costume, the labor was over; their faces revealed no exuberance, they danced with the grace and freedom which artists unknown to us have given to the statues of antiquity. The others, marked by the impress of labor, remained in awkward attitudes and were altogether too much diverted; their looks were inconsiderately inquisitive, their voices were far from preserving that scarcely audible murmur which gives to conversation at balls its inimitable raciness; above all, they did not possess that impertinent solemnity under which lurks the embryo epigram, nor that attitude of unconcern which distinguishes those accustomed to self-possession. Thus Madame Rabourdin, Madame Jules, and Mademoiselle de Fontaine, who had looked forward with infinite delight to this perfumer's ball, stood out in bold relief from the majority of the company, by their exquisite grace, by the perfect taste of their dress and by their man-

ners, as three leading ladies of the ballet are conspicuous above the heavy cavalry of their attendants. They were watched with stolid and jealous eyes. Madame Roguin, Constance and Césarine formed, as it were, a link between the mercantile physiognomies and the three types of feminine aristocracy. As at every ball, there came a moment of excitement when the torrents of light, the music, the gaiety of the company and the animation of the dance, produced an intoxication in which all these distinctions disappeared. The ball was on the point of becoming noisy, and Mademoiselle de Fontaine was anxious to retire ; but when she sought the arm of the venerable Vendean, Birotteau, his wife and daughter, hurried to prevent the desertion of the entire aristocracy of the assembly.

"There is an odor of good taste in these rooms which really astonishes me," said the impertinent girl to the perfumer, "and I congratulate you upon it."

Birotteau was so thoroughly intoxicated by the felicitations of everybody, that he did not catch her meaning ; but his wife colored, and could make no reply.

"You have given a national festivity which does you honor," said Camusot.

"I have rarely seen so fine a ball," said M. de la Billardière, who could tell an agreeable fib without scruple.

Birotteau took all these compliments in earnest.

"What an enchanting spectacle ! And such a nice band ! Are you going to give balls often ?" said Madame Lebas.

"What charming rooms ! And decorated after your own designs, I suppose ?" said Madame Desmarets.

Birotteau ventured to prevaricate in allowing her to imagine that the designs were his.

Césarine, who knew she would be invited for every

quadrille, perceived the delicacy of Anselme's conduct. "If I heeded my desires only," he whispered in her ear as they rose from the table before the ball, "I would beg you to give me one quadrille; but my happiness would be purchased by too great a sacrifice of our mutual self-love."

Césarine, who thought that men who stood straight upon their legs were very awkward in their gait, insisted upon opening the ball with Popinot. Anselme, encouraged by his aunt, who told him to venture, did venture to speak of his love to the charming girl during the dance, but with the usual circumlocutions resorted to by timid lovers.

"My fortune depends on you, Mademoiselle."

"How so?"

"There is only one hope that can stimulate me to make it."

"Hope, then!"

"Do you know the significance of that single word?" asked Popinot.

"Hope to make your fortune," said Césarine with a bewitching smile.

"Gaudissart! Gaudissart!" said Anselme to his friend, after the quadrille, squeezing his arm with Herculean strength, "succeed, or I blow my brains out. Success is marriage with Césarine, she said so herself, and see how beautiful she is!"

"Yes, she *is* well got up," returned Gaudissart, "and rich. We'll serve her up in oil."

The understanding between Mademoiselle Lourdois and Alexander Crottat, Roguin's appointed successor, was noticed by Madame Birotteau, who did not abandon, without lively regret, the hope of seeing her daughter the wife of a Parisian notary. Uncle Pillerault, who had

exchanged salutations with little Molineux, had taken his seat in an arm-chair near the library ; he looked at the players, heard what people said, and from time to time went to the door to admire the bouquets of revolving flowers formed by the heads of the ladies when dancing the windmill. His countenance was that of a true philosopher. The men were positively dreadful, with the exception of du Tillet, who had already acquired the manners of good society ; of the young Billardière, a little fashionable in the bud ; of Jules Desmarets and the official characters present, but among all these faces, more or less comic, to which the assembly owed its character, there was one rendered curious by his attire, though otherwise he was as much obliterated and forgotten as a coin uttered during the republic. The reader divines that we refer to the tyrant of the Cour Batave, decked out in fine linen that had turned yellow by keeping, and exhibiting a lace shirt frill (left him in somebody's will) fastened by a bluish cameo pin ; he wore short black silk tights which betrayed the size of the spindles upon which he had the hardihood to rest his weight. César triumphantly pointed out to him the four rooms created by the architect on the first story of his house.

"Very well, it's your own affair, sir," said Molineux. "My first story, thus decorated, would bring me more than three thousand francs."

Birotteau answered with a jest, but he felt as if he had been sharply pricked, at the accent with which the little old man had uttered this phrase.

"My first story will soon come back to me, that man is going to ruin !" such was the meaning of the expression "would bring me" which Molineux had darted at Birotteau as if it had been a blow with his talons.

The pale face and murderous eye of the landlord struck du Tillet, whose attention had been first attracted by a watch chain holding at least a pound of jingling charms, and by a greenish-whitish coat, with the collar singularly turned up, giving him the aspect of a rattle-snake. Thereupon the banker interrogated the usurer, in order to learn what made him so merry.

"Here, sir," said Molineux, putting one foot in the boudoir, "I stand upon the property of the Count de Grandville ; but here," he added, indicating his other foot, "I am upon mine ; for I am the owner of this house."

Molineux was so delightfully communicative to any one who would listen to him, that, enchanted by the attention which du Tillet lent to his discourse, he let himself out, he gave an account of his habits, of the insolence of Gendrin, and his arrangement with the perfumer, without which the ball would not have taken place.

"Ah, Monsieur César has submitted to your conditions," said du Tillet, "nothing is more contrary to his custom."

"Oh, I demanded it, I am so kind to my tenants !"

"If Birotteau fails," thought du Tillet, "this little wretch will make an excellent syndic. His punctilliousness is invaluable ; when he is alone at home, I dare say he amuses himself by killing flies, like Domitian."

Du Tillet went and sat down at the gaming table, where Claparon already was, according to his order ; he had thought that with blazing candelabra standing sentry over him, his pretension to the character of a banker would run little danger of exciting remark. Their faces, when thus opposite to each other, were so completely those of two strangers, that the most suspicious

looker-on would have discovered nothing to betray their understanding. Gaudissart, who knew Claparon's circumstances, nevertheless dared not accost him, on receiving from that worthy commercial gentleman the cold and distant look of a parvenu who refuses the salutation of a former companion.

The ball, like a blazing rocket, died out and came to an end at five o'clock in the morning. At that time, but forty carriages remained of the one hundred and odd which had filled the Rue St. Honoré. The company were dancing a country dance—dethroned in after years by the German cotillion and the English gallop. Du Tillet, Roguin, Cardot Junior, the Count de Grandville, and Jules Desmarets were at the gambling table. Du Tillet had won three thousand francs. The first rays of dawn appeared and paled the light of the candles; the players rose and witnessed the closing dance. In the houses of the bourgeois, the transports of the breaking up rarely pass without the enactment of a few extravagances. The important characters are gone; the intoxication of the motion, the communicative warmth of the atmosphere, the spirit lurking in the most apparently innocent beverages, have by this time softened even the old ladies' stiffest joints, and they complaisantly take part in the dance, and yield to the folly of the moment; the men perspire, their hair comes out of curl and hangs down limp over their faces, giving them a grotesque and laughter-provoking aspect; the young women become giddy and the wreaths upon their heads begin to rain flowers on the floor. The Momus of the bourgeois appears and mirth follows in his train! A burst of laughter welcomes him and everybody gives himself up to tomfoolery, knowing that on the morrow labor will reclaim their service. Matifat danced with a

woman's bonnet on his head ; Célestin abandoned himself to buffoonery. A few of the women frantically clapped their hands together when required by the figure of this interminable dance.

"What a good time they are having!" said Birotteau, delighted.

"I only hope they won't break anything," said Constance to her uncle.

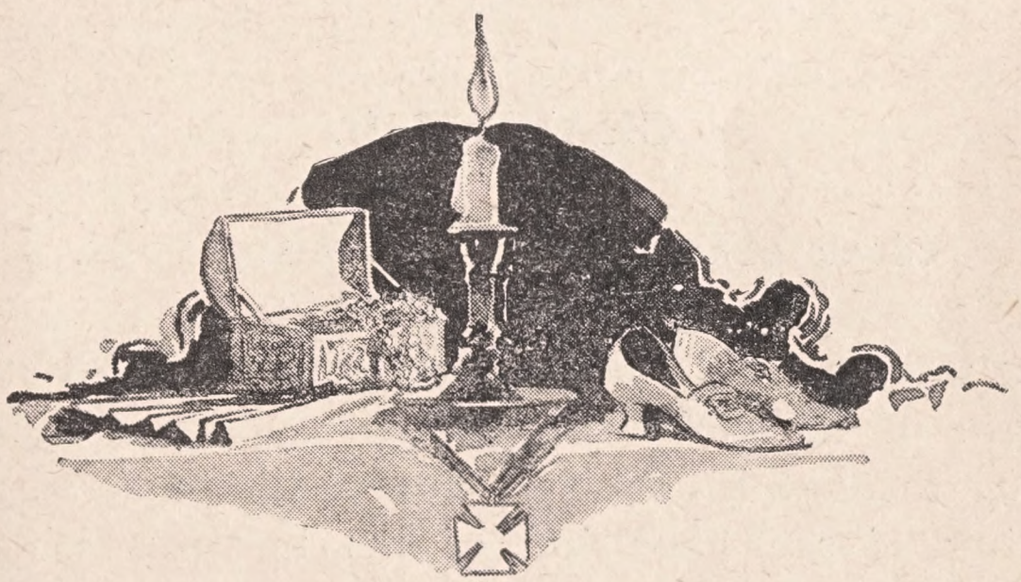
"Your ball is the most magnificent I have ever seen, and I have seen a great many," said du Tillet to his former master on bidding him good-night.

In that sublime composition—the eight symphonies of Beethoven—there is a fantasia with all the grandeur of an epic poem, which is the burden of the finale to the symphony in C minor. When, after the dallying preparations of the sublime magician so admirably interpreted by Habeneck, the leader of the orchestra, a wave of that enthusiastic hand rolls up the rich curtain of the scene, summoning forth with his baton the dazzling theme in which all the powers of music have been concentrated, poets, whose hearts then beat within them, will comprehend how Birotteau's ball produced, in his simple life, the effect produced upon them by this teeming air, to which, perhaps, the symphony in C owes its supremacy over its brilliant sisters. A radiant fairy darts forward and raises her wand. The listener hears the rustling of the purple curtains raised by angels' hands. Gates of gold, sculptured like the portals of the Florentine Baptistry, revolve on their diamond hinges. The eye is lost in splendid views ; at one glance it embraces a colonnade of marvelous palaces, in which flit beings of heavenly birth. The incense of glory smokes, the altar of happiness flashes, you breathe a

perfumed air! Creatures, whose smile is divine, clothed in white tunics edged with blue, pass lightly before your eyes, disclosing faces of superhuman beauty and forms of infinite grace. The Loves hover around, shedding the light of their torches upon the scene. You feel yourself beloved; you are blessed in a happiness which you inhale without comprehending how, bathed in the waves of that harmony which flows in living streams, and runs, for all, with the nectar they have chosen. The sweet aspirations of your heart are for one instant realized. The enchanter, having convoyed you through the heavens, plunges you back, by the profound and mysterious transition of the violincellos, into the morass of cold realities, to drag you forth once more, when you thirst anew for his divine melodies, and when your soul cries out, Again! The psychologic analysis of the culminating point of this glorious finale will answer for that of the emotions showered on César and Constance by this wondrous festivity. Collinet, Birotteau's chief musician, had performed the finale of their commercial symphony upon his squeaking three-holed fife.

Weary, but blest, the three Birotteaus fell asleep, by day-light, to the dying murmurs of this ball, which, in buildings, repairs, furniture, refreshments, dress, and the expenses of the library which were refunded to Césarine, cost, though César was far from suspecting it, hard upon sixty thousand francs. Such was the issue of the fatal red ribbon fastened by a king to a perfumer's button-hole. Should César Birotteau meet with misfortune, this absurd expenditure was enough to bring him before the Correctional Police. A tradesman, who goes to expenses considered inordinate in his position, may be

found guilty of simple bankruptcy, as distinguished from fraudulent bankruptcy. It is perhaps worse to go before a petty tribunal charged with folly and indiscretion, than to appear at the bar of the Court of Assizes for an immense imposture. In the eyes of certain people, it is better to be criminal than weak.



THE GREATNESS AND DECLINE

OF

CESAR BIROTTEAU.

CHAPTER II.

CÉSAR STRUGGLING WITH MISFORTUNE.

One week after the ball—that last flicker of the expiring fire of an eighteen years prosperity—Cèsar was looking through his shop window at the passers-by, and thinking of the extension of his business which he found alarmingly heavy. Until then everything had been plain and straightforward in his life; he either manufactured and sold, or he bought to sell again. But now, the affair of the lots, his interest in the house of A. Popinot & Co., the repayment of the one hundred and sixty thousand francs he had thrown into the market, and which would require either a traffic in notes that would displease his wife, or the most unheard-of success at Popinot's—all these things agitated the poor man by the multiplicity of the ideas they suggested, and he felt that he had more threads in his hand than

he could conveniently manage. And how would Anselme guide his bark? Birotteau treated Popinot as a professor of rhetoric treats a pupil: he distrusted his capacity, and regretted that he could not control his movements. The slight kick which he had dealt him at Vauquelin's to reduce him to silence, sufficiently attests the apprehension with which the young tradesman inspired the perfumer. Birotteau took good care not to be discovered by his wife, his daughter, or his clerk; but he was in reality like a boatman of the Seine, on whom a cabinet minister had conferred the command of a frigate.

These thoughts induced a foggy state of mind which rendered meditation difficult; and César remained standing, endeavoring to disentangle his ideas. At this moment a figure appeared in the street—one for which he felt a violent antipathy, that of his second landlord, little Molineux.

Every one has dreamed that eventful dream which seems to represent an entire life-time, and in which is constantly coming and going a fantastic being charged with diabolical errands—the villain of the play. Molineux seemed to Birotteau entrusted by fate with an analogous part to play in his life. This figure had made demoniacal grimaces in the middle of the ball, regarding the sumptuous preparations with an eye of hatred. On seeing him again, César recalled the impression made upon him by the little niggard—one of his favorite words—and all the more readily as Molineux gave him a new start by thus coming upon him in the midst of his reverie.

"Sir," said the little man, with his disgustingly anodyne voice, "we hurried things up so fast that you forgot to sign that little agreement of ours."

Birotteau took the lease to repair his forgetfulness. The architect entered at this moment, bowed to the perfumer and walked around about him in a diplomatic manner.

"Sir," he at last whispered to him, "you know how difficult it is to start in any profession ; you are satisfied with what I have done, and would oblige me much by paying me the sum agreed on for my services."

Birotteau, who had completely drained himself by giving his negotiable paper and his ready money to Claparon, directed Célestin to make a note of two thousand francs, at three months from date, and to write out a receipt.

"I am delighted at your having assumed your neighbor's unexpired lease," said Molineux, in a manner at once insidious and satirical. "My porter came to inform me this morning that a justice of the peace was putting on the seals, owing to Cayron's having run away."

"I only hope I'm not stuck for five thousand francs," thought Birotteau.

"He was considered a good business man," said Lourdois, who had just come in to hand his bill to the perfumer.

"A tradesman is never beyond the reach of a reverse till he has retired," said Molineux, folding his document with the most scrupulous precision.

The architect examined the little old man with that pleasure which every artist feels on seeing a human caricature confirmatory of his opinions upon the bourgeois.

"When a man's head is under an umbrella," he said, "he is apt to think it protected, if it rains."

Molineux looked at the architect, studying his mous-

tache and his imperial much more closely than his face, and he despised him quite as much as Grindot despised him. He remained in order to give him a thrust at parting. Molineux had lived so long with his cats, that he had caught a portion of the feline character, and it was visible both in his eyes and his manner.

At this moment Ragon and Pillerault entered.

"We have spoken of our affair to the judge," said Ragon in César's ear; "his opinion is, that in a speculation of this kind, we ought to have a receipt from the sellers and make the transaction real, in order to be all of us indivisible owners."

"Ah! you are in this Madeleine affair, are you?" said Lourdois. "I hear it spoken of; there'll be buildings to put up, I suppose."

The painter, who had come with the intention of having an immediate settlement, thought it more to his interest not to press the perfumer.

"I just handed in my account for the close of the year," he whispered to César. "I don't want it at all."

"Why, what's the matter, César?" said Pillerault, remarking the surprise of his nephew, who was so overcome at the sight of the bill, that he could not reply either to Ragon or to Lourdois.

"Nothing; I've taken five thousand francs in notes from my neighbor the umbrella man, and he's failed. If the notes are bad, I've been done."

"Well," cried Ragon, "I told you long ago that a drowning man would catch hold of his father's leg and drag him under too. I have seen so many failures! A man is not exactly a swindler at the outset, but he becomes one from necessity."

"That's true," said Pillerault.

"If I ever get to the Chamber of Deputies, or have any

influence with the government—" said Birotteau, standing on tip-toe and then falling back upon his heels.

"What would you do ?" said Lourdois, "for you know a thing or two."

Molineux, interested in any and every discussion upon the laws, remained in the store ; and as the listening of others makes listeners, Ragon and Pillerault, who were acquainted with César's opinion, heard him with as much gravity as the three strangers.

"I would have," said the perfumer, "a tribunal of judges appointed for life, with a public prosecutor, and competent to act as a criminal court. After an investigation, in which one of the judges should assume the functions now exercised by the agents, the syndics and the commissary-judge, the trader or merchant should be declared a *rehabilitable bankrupt* or a *bankrupt.* If the former, he should be required to pay in full ; he would be, then, the guardian, merely, of his own and of his wife's property ; for every thing, even his rights, even legacies left to him, would belong to his creditors ; he should act for their account and under surveillance ; and he should continue his business, placing, however, the word "bankrupt," after his signature, till the last sou were paid. If declared a bankrupt, he should be condemned, as formerly, to the pillory in the great hall of the Exchange, and should stand there two hours with the green cap upon his head. His property, that of his wife, his rights and privileges, should be made over to his creditors, and he should be banished from the kingdom."

"Trade would be decidedly safer," said Lourdois, "and people would think twice before going into a speculation."

"The law, even as it stands, is not obeyed," said

César, exasperated. "Out of one hundred tradesmen, there are more than fifty who are seventy-five per cent behind-hand in their business, or who sell their goods twenty-five per cent. below the current price, thus ruining all trade."

"The gentleman is correct," said Molineux; "the law allows too great latitude. A man should give up all he has, or be infamous."

"Why," cried César, "as things are going now, a merchant will soon become a patented thief. By simply signing his name, he can finger the cash-box of everybody in town."

"You are rather severe, Monsieur Birotteau," said Lourdois.

"He's right, though," put in old Ragon.

"All who have failed are to be suspected," said Cèsar, annoyed beyond measure by this unimportant loss, which sounded in his ears as does the first echo of the hunter's halali in those of the stag at bay.

Here a steward entered with the bill of the house of Chevet. Then a pastry cook's boy from Félix, a waiter from the café de Foy, and Collinet's clarionet brought in the bills of their respective establishments.

"Settling day," said Ragon, smiling.

"Well, it was a fine ball, at any rate," said Lourdois.

"I am busy," said César to the messengers, who thereupon left the bills.

"Monsieur Grindot," said Lourdois, upon seeing the architect fold up the note that Birotteau had signed, "be good enough to look over and verify my account, a glance will be enough, as all the prices were agreed upon by you on behalf of Monsieur Birotteau."

Pillerault looked at Lourdois and Grindot.

"The prices agreed upon between the architect and

the contractor!" said the uncle in the nephew's ear, "you are imposed upon."

Grindot went out. Molineux followed and accosted him with a mysterious manner.

"Sir," said he, "you heard me, but you did not understand me; I hope you may have an umbrella."

Fear seized upon Grindot. The more illegal profits may be, the more a man hankers after them. The human heart is made so. The architect had really worked with zeal upon the suite of rooms, he had given it the best of his knowledge and the greater part of his time; he had labored hard enough for ten thousand francs, and considered himself the dupe of his professional pride. The contractors had had little trouble in winning him over. That irresistible argument, and the threat, well understood if not expressed, to do him an ill-turn by calumniating him, was still less powerful than the observation made by Lourdois upon the Madeleine land speculation; Birotteau did not intend to build a single house, his only interest was in the value of the lots. Architects and contractors are relatively situated like dramatic authors and actors; they depend the one upon the other. Grindot, authorized by Birotteau to agree upon the prices, took the part of the artisans against the bourgeois. Thus, three of the heaviest contractors, Lourdois, Chaffaroux, and Thorein the carpenter, declared him one of those clever fellows that it is a pleasure to have dealings with. Grindot foresaw that their bills, in which his commissions gave him an interest, would be paid, like his salary, in notes, and the little old man had just suggested a doubt as to their being honored. Grindot resolved to be pitiless, after the manner of artists, the most unrelenting creditors that a bourgeois can fall in with.

Towards the close of December, César had received bills to the amount of sixty thousand francs. Félix, the café de Foy, Tanrade, and such small creditors as should have been paid in cash, had sent three times for their money. In trade, these vexatious trifles are more injurious than a disaster; they announce it. Known losses are definite, but panic knows no bounds. Birotteau's till was empty. The perfumer was frightened; such a thing had never happened to him in the course of his mercantile life. Like all persons who have never been called upon to sustain long struggles with penury, and who are weak in consequence, this circumstance, so common in the experience of the majority of the small dealers of Paris, brought trouble to César's mind. He directed Célestin to collect the sums due from his customers; but, before putting this order in execution, the head-clerk allowed it to be repeated. His clients—tradesmen applied this lofty term to their habitual purchasers, and César used it in spite of his wife, who, at last, however, had said, "Call them what you like, as long as they pay"—his clients were rich people by whom loss was impossible, and who paid when they pleased, and who were often in César's debt fifty or sixty thousand francs. The second clerk took the sales-book, and began to copy the largest accounts. César was afraid of his wife. To conceal from her the dejection in which this simoom of calamities had plunged him he resolved to go out for a walk.

"How d'ye do?" said Grindot, coming in with that careless air which artists assume for the purpose of talking of matters in which they pretend to have no interest. "I can't get this paper of yours cashed, though I've tried high and low, so I shall have to ask you to change it for specie. I'm the worst off of the two in the matter,

but I don't know how to talk to usurers, and I don't like to peddle your signature about ; I know enough of trade to see that it must degrade it ; so that it is in your interest to—"

"Sir," said Birotteau, quite stupefied, "not so loud, if you please, you surprise me strangely."

Lourdois entered.

Birotteau stopped. The poor man was on the point of begging Lourdois to take Grindot's note, at the same time making light of the architect's request, with the good faith of the trader sure of his own solvency ; but he saw a cloud upon Lourdois' brow, and he shuddered at his imprudence. An innocent piece of raillery like that would have been the death blow to a suspected credit. Under such circumstances, a really sound tradesman takes back his note and offers it no more. Birotteau felt his head as dizzy as if he had looked over a yawning precipice.

"My dear Monsieur Birotteau," said Lourdois, taking him to the back of the store, "my bill has been looked over and verified, and I hope you will have the money ready for me to-morrow. I'm going to marry my daughter to young Crottat, he wants money down, for notaries never negotiate, and besides, people have never seen my signature."

"Send day after to-morrow," said Birotteau, loftily, who reckoned on the payment of his bills. "And you, too, sir," said he to the architect.

"And why not now ?" asked Grindot.

"I have my workmen in the Faubourg to pay," said César, who had never told an untrnth.

He took his hat to go out with them. But the mason, Thorein, and Chaffaroux met him on the threshold.

"Sir," said Chaffaroux, "we want money."

"Bless my soul, I've not got the mines of Peru," said César, impatiently, leaving them a hundred paces behind him. "There's something underneath all this. That cursed ball! Everybody thinks me a millionaire. Nevertheless, Lourdois' manner was not natural; there's something in the wind."

He walked along in the Rue St. Honoré without purpose, feeling himself, as it were, resolved into his elements, and ran against Alexander at the corner of a street, as two rams, or two mathematicians absorbed in the solution of a problem, might have encountered and engaged each other.

"Ah, sir," said the notary that was to be, "one question! Did Roguin hand your four hundred thousand francs to Monsieur Claparon?"

"The affair was transacted in your presence; Monsieur Claparon gave me no receipt; my paper was to be negotiated—Roguin must have given him—my two hundred and forty thousand francs in money—it was agreed that the deeds of sale should be definitely realized—Judge Popinot thinks—the receipt—but why do you ask, for mercy sake?"

"Why do I ask? To learn whether your two hundred and forty thousand francs are in the hands of Claparon or those of Roguin. Roguin had been intimate with you so long, that I thought he might have had the decency to make them over to Claparon, and, in that case, you would have escaped, though narrowly. But, stupid that I was! He has made off with them and with Claparon's money, too, which, happily, was only one hundred thousand francs. Roguin has fled, taking with him the hundred thousand francs which I had paid upon the good will of the office, and for which I took no receipt; I gave them as I would give you my purse.

The owners of your lots have not received a single sou upon them, they left the office just now. The loan which was alleged to have been negotiated upon your part of the land was imaginary; Roguin had already squandered it—a deposite made by your pretended lender—as he had your hundred thousand francs, which —he had got rid of—long ago. So that your last hundred thousand are gone; I remember having drawn them at the bank."

The pupils of César's eyes dilated to such an unnatural extent that he saw nothing but a red blaze.

"Your hundred thousand francs from the bank, my hundred thousand paid towards the office, one hundred thousand belonging to Claparon,—there are three hundred thousand francs blown away at a whiff, besides the smaller robberies which will of course come to light," resumed the young notary. "Madame Roguin's life is despaired of, du Tillet watched with her during the night. Du Tillet himself only escaped by the skin of his teeth. Roguin has been teasing him for a month past, to get him into the affair, but fortunately all his funds were tied up in a speculation with the house of Nucingen. Roguin has written his wife a frightful letter; I have just read it. For five years he has been fingering his clients' deposites, and for whom, think you? For a woman, the belle Hollandaise! He left her a fortnight before striking the grand blow. The thriftless creature was without a sou; she had put her name to sundry papers, so her furniture was sold. In order to escape legal process, she took refuge in a house in the Palais Royal, where she was assassinated last night by a captain. God has speedily punished her, for she was certainly the cause of Roguin's ruin. There are some women who have no respect for an thing!

Think of swallowing up, in this way, a notary's privilege, good will and all! Madame Roguin will have no resources beyond her legal share of her husband's means, for all the rascal's property is encumbered far beyond its value. The office is worth three hundred thousand francs; and I, who thought I was doing a smart thing, have begun by paying one hundred thousand more for it, for I have no receipt, and the creditors will think I am his accomplice if I speak of it, and a beginner must take care of his reputation! You'll barely receive thirty per cent. To have to swallow a dose like that, at my age! A man fifty-nine years old spending money on women—the vicious old blackguard! He told me three weeks ago not to marry Césarine, for you would soon be without bread to your mouths, the monster!"

Alexander might have gone on much longer, Birotteau stood there motionless, petrified. Every sentence was a blow from a sledge hammer. He heard nothing but the din of bells ringing out his knell, as at first he had seen nothing but the flames of his own conflagration. Alexander Crottat, who thought the worthy perfumer a strong and self-reliant man, was alarmed by his pallor and his motionless attitude. He did not know that Roguin carried off more than César's fortune. The idea of immediate suicide entered the head of the tradesman, in spite of his profound piety. In such a case as this, suicide presents itself as a means of escaping a thousand deaths, and it seems logical enough to suffer but one of them. Alexander gave his arm to César, and tried to make him walk, but found it impossible; his legs gave way under him, as if he had been drunk.

"Why, how now, my good sir?" said Crottat. "Come, take courage, it won't kill a man! Besides, you'll get forty thousand back, the supposed lender had no

such sum, he did not deliver it to you, you can go to law for the rescission of the contract."

"My ball, my ribbon, two hundred thousand francs in notes in the market, and nothing in hand. The Ragons, Pillerault, and my wife, who suspected it!"

A shower of confused words followed, awakening masses of overwhelming thoughts and indescribable tortures, like a hail-storm making mince meat of the flowers in the parterre of the Queen of Roses.

"I wish my head could be cut off," said Birotteau, at last, "it's heavy and unwieldy, and isn't of the slightest use."

"Why, my good sir," exclaimed Alexander, "you are not in peril, are you?"

"Peril?"

"Well, then, take heart and fight it out!"

"Fight it out?" repeated the perfumer.

"Du Tillet was your clerk once; he's a high-minded fellow, and he'll assist you."

"Du Tillet?"

"Yes, come along with me."

"By heaven, I don't want to go home as I am," said Birotteau. "You, who are my friend, if there are such things as friends, and you know I was interested in you, and you used to dine at my house, in the name of my wife, take me to ride in a carriage! Xandrot, come with me!"

The notary, thus apostrophized, with great difficulty crammed the inert piece of machinery called César into a carriage.

"Xandrot," said the perfumer, in a voice choked by his tears—for at this moment his tears began to flow and somewhat relaxed the iron bandage which seemed to encircle his brain,—"let us stop at the store, and you

shall speak for me to Célestin. Tell him that my life and that of my wife are at stake. Let no one speak of the disappearance of Roguin upon any pretext whatever. Call Césarine down and warn her not to allow the subject to be mentioned to her mother. Tell her to distrust our best friends, Pillerault, the Ragons, everybody."

The change of tone in Birotteau's voice struck Crottat forcibly, and he saw the importance of these directions. The Rue St. Honoré led to the house of the magistrate whom Crottat wished to consult; so he obeyed these injunctions on the way, and Célestin and Césarine were affrighted to see the perfumer in the back of the carriage, pale, voiceless, and apparently senseless.

"Oblige me by keeping this matter secret," he said to Crottat.

"Ah!" thought Xandrot, "he's coming back again; I thought he was gone."

Alexander's conference with the magistrate lasted some time; the president of the chamber of notaries was sent for; César was carried about like a bundle, neither stirring nor uttering a syllable. Towards seven in the evening, Crottat took the perfumer home. The thought of meeting Constance partially restored César's strength. The young notary charitably went in first and told Madame Birotteau that her husband had just had a sort of rush of blood to the head.

"His ideas are very much confused," he said, making the gesture employed to indicate a disorder of the brain, "he ought to be bled or leeched, I think."

"I thought it would be so," said Constance, who was a thousand miles from suspecting a calamity, "he did not take his precautionary purge at the beginning of winter, and he's been working for two months like a galley-slave, as if he still had his bread to earn."

César was begged by his wife and daughter to go at once to bed, and old doctor Haudry, Birotteau's physician, was sent for. Haudry was a physician of the school so ridiculed by Molière, a great practitioner and advocate of the time-honored formulas of the apothecaries, dosing his patients as if he were a regular horse-doctor, consulting-physician though he was. He came, examined César's physiognomy, and ordered an immediate application of mustard poultices to the soles of his feet. He had discovered symptoms of congestion of the brain.

"What can have caused it?" asked Constance.

"The wet weather," answered the doctor, after a whisper from Césarine.

It often becomes the duty of physicians knowingly to give utterance to stupidities such as this, in order to save the honor or the life of the persons in full health who attend upon the patient. The old doctor had seen so many things that he took the hint at once. Césarine followed him to the staircase to receive her instructions.

"Keep him quiet and don't talk; when his head gets clear, we'll risk a strengthener."

Madame César passed two days at her husband's bedside. He seemed to her several times to be out of his head; lying in his wife's fine blue room, and gazing constantly at its draperies, its furniture and other costly sumptuosities, he made speeches which to her were totally incomprehensible.

"He's mad," she said to Césarine, as César sat up in bed, making, in a solemn voice, incongruous quotations from the Commercial Code.

"If a tradesman's expenses are considered excessive!—Take those curtains down!"

After three terrible days, during which César's reason

was in danger, the powerful constitution of the Touraine peasant came off victorious; his head was relieved; Haudry gave him cordials and a nourishing diet, and after a cup of coffee administered at the proper moment César was on his feet again. Constance, who was tired out, took her husband's place.

"Poor thing!" said César, when she had fallen asleep.

"Come, father, courage! You are so superior a man, that you'll win the day, after all. It won't be anything. Monsieur Anselme will help you."

Césarine uttered these vague words in her sweetest voice—words which affection still further sweetens and which restore the courage of the most dejected, as the songs of a mother lull the restlessness of a child undergoing the miseries of teething.

"Yes, child. I mean to struggle to the last; but not a word to any one whatsoever, neither to Popinot who loves us so much, nor to your uncle Pillerault. I'll write at once to my brother; I believe he is prebendary, or vicar of a cathedral; he has no expenses, and must have laid up money. If he has put by three thousand francs a year, for twenty years, he'll have one hundred thousand francs. In the provinces, priests have good credit."

Césarine, in her haste to give her father his desk and the materials with which to write, brought him a bundle of unused invitations to the ball, printed upon rose-colored paper.

"Burn them up!" cried the perfumer. "The devil himself must have urged me to give that ball. If I succumb, I shall look like a swindler. Not a word, Césarine, not a word.

Letter from César Birotteau to his brother François.

"My dear brother :—

I am in a commercial crisis of so serious a nature, that I beg you to send me all the money at your disposal, even if you have to borrow.

Ever Yours, CÉSAR.

P. S. Your niece Césarine, who is looking over me while I write and while my poor wife sleeps, hopes you have not forgotten her and sends her love."

This postscript was added at the request of Césarine who carried the letter to Raguet.

"Father," she said on returning, "Monsieur Lebas would like to speak to you."

"Monsieur Lebas!" cried César, as much alarmed as if his misfortunes rendered him criminal; "a judge!"

"My dear Monsieur Birotteau," said the fat draper upon entering the room, "we have been too long acquainted—for we have both been judges and the first time were elected together—for me not to inform you that a usurer named Bidault, and familiarly called Gigonnet, has in his hands several notes of yours, made payable to his order, *without guaranty*, by the house of Claparon. These two words are not only an insult, but they are fatal to your credit."

"Monsieur Claparon desires to speak with you," said Célestin, opening the door, "shall I show him up?"

"We'll learn the cause of this affront," said Lebas.

"Sir," said the perfumer to Claparon upon his presenting himself, "this is Monsieur Lebas, judge in the Tribunal of Commerce, and my friend—"

"Ah, you are Monsieur Lebas, are you?" said Claparon, breaking in, "I am delighted at the opportunity;

Monsieur Lebas of the tribunal, there are so many Lebas that really—"

"He has seen," resumed Birotteau, interrupting the garrulous gentleman, "he has seen the notes I gave you and which you said would not circulate, with these words upon them—*without guaranty*."

"Well," said Claparon, "they will not be circulated really, they are in the hands of a man with whom I have large transactions, papa Bidault. This is why I put "without guaranty" upon them. If they had been meant for circulation you would have drawn them directly to his order. The judge will understand my situation. What do these notes represent? The price of a piece of real estate. Paid by whom? by Birotteau. Why do you want me to guarantee Birotteau by my signature? We have to pay, each on our part, our share of this price. Now, is it not enough that we are jointly and severally liable to the land owners? For my own part I never deviate from the rules of trade. I no more think of guaranteeing any one for nothing than I would give a receipt for a sum I have not received. Anything may happen. Whoever signs, pays. I do not want to run the risk of having to pay three times."

"Three times!" said César.

"Yes, sir," Claparon continued. "I have already guaranteed Birotteau to the land holders; why should I guarantee him over again to a banker? We are in a difficult position; Roguin robs me of a hundred thousand francs. Thus, my half of the lands cost me already, five instead of four hundred thousand francs. Roguin runs off with two hundred and forty thousand francs belonging to Birotteau. What would you do in my place, Monsieur Lebas? Put yourself in my skin. I have not the honor to be known to you, more than I

know Monsieur Birotteau. Mark well, now. We have an undertaking together; each has a half. On your side you furnish all in cash; I on my part offer notes. I offer them to you; you undertake, by an excess of willingness to oblige, to convert them into money. You learn that Claparon, banker, rich, esteemed—I accept all the virtues in the world—that the virtuous Claparon fails for six millions; would you, at that very moment, sign your name as guarantee for me? You would be mad! Well, Monsieur Lebas, Birotteau is in the condition in which I suppose Claparon. Don't you see that I may have to pay the purchasers as being conjointly liable, be compelled to make good Birotteau's share to the amount of his notes, if I guaranteed them, and without having—"

"Make good to whom?" asked the perfumer, interrupting him.

"And without having his half of the lands," said Claperon, without attending to the interruption; "for I should have no preference; I should then have to buy it over again! Thus I may have to pay three times."

"Make good to whom?" Birotteau insisted.

"Why, to the holder, if I endorsed, and you got into difficulty."

"I shall not fail, sir," said Birotteau.

"Good," said Claparon. "You have been judge, you are an able man of business; you know that a man should be prepared against all emergencies; therefore, do not be astonished if I look out for myself."

"Monsieur Claparon is right," said Joseph Lebas.

"I am right," said Claparon, "right commercially. But this affair is one of real estate. Now, what ought I to receive? Money, for money must be given to the sellers. Let us pass by the two hundred and forty thous-

and francs which Monsieur Birotteau will get back, I am sure," said Claparon, looking at Lebas. "I came to ask for the trifle of twenty-five thousand francs," said he, turning to Birotteau.

"Twenty-five thousand francs!" exclaimed Birotteau, who felt his blood freeze in his veins. "But, sir, what claim have you?"

"Why, my dear sir, we are obliged to realize the sales before a notary. Now, with respect to the price, we can arrange that amongst ourselves; but we can have no arrangements with the Exchequer! The Exchequer does not amuse itself with idle words; it trusts a man from his hand to his pocket, and we have to come down with dues to the amount of forty-four thousand francs this week. I was far from expecting reproaches in coming here; for, thinking that these twenty-five thousand francs might inconvenience you, I had to announce to you that, by the greatest good luck, I have saved you—"

"What!" said Birotteau, with that cry of distress which no man ever misunderstands.

"A mere nothing! The *bills on sundries* for twenty thousand francs which Roguin sent me to negotiate, I have put to your credit towards the registration and expenses, of which I will send you the account; the small fee for negotiation is to be deducted, and you will owe me six or seven thousand francs."

"All this seems to me quite right," said Lebas. "In the place of this gentleman, who evidently understands business well, I should act just the same towards a stranger."

"Monsieur Birotteau will not die of it," said Claparon. "It takes more than one blow to kill an old wolf;

I have seen wolves with balls in their heads run like—well, like wolves."

"Who could foresee such a crime as that of Roguin?" said Lebas, as much frightened by César's silence as by this gigantic speculation outside of his legitimate business.

"I was very near giving Monsieur Birotteau a receipt for four hundred thousand francs," said Claparon, "and if I had, I should have been done for. I had given Roguin a hundred thousand francs the evening before. Our mutual confidence saved me. Whether the money remained in his office or in my house till the final settlement of the contracts, seemed a matter of perfect indifference."

"It would have been better had each kept his money in the bank till the time came for paying," said Lebas.

"Roguin was my bank," said César. "But he, too, is concerned in the affair," he resumed, looking at Claparon.

"Yes, for a quarter, on parole," answered Claparon. "After the folly of allowing him to run away with my money, there's another still bigger, that of giving him more. If he sends back my one hundred thousand francs and two hundred thousand others for his own share, why, then, we'll see what will come of it. But he will take good care not to send them for an operation which requires five years of pot-boiling before yielding the first soup. If, as is said, he has only carried off three hundred thousand francs, fifteen thousand francs, the interest of it, will be no more than he needs to live decently abroad."

"The brigand!"

"See to what a pass his passions have brought him," said Claparon. "Where is the old man who can answer for his not being overpowered and carried away by his

last fancy? Neither of us, virtuous as are we, knows what he may come to. The last love is the fiercest. Why did we not distrust a notary who meddled with speculation? Every notary, every broker, every commission-merchant, who operates, may well be suspected. Failure, in their case, is fraudulent bankruptcy, and if they stayed in the country the court of assizes would claim them, so they prefer a foreign court. I shall not need another such lesson. To think, too, that we are weak enough not to have these people convicted by default, because we have dined at their houses, and because they have given us balls. Nobody enters a complaint; everybody is wrong."

"Very wrong," said Birotteau; "the law upon failures and bankruptcies needs total revision."

"If you should have need of me," said Lebas to Birotteau, "I am at your service."

"He has no need of any one," said the indefatigable talker—du Tillet, who had first supplied the water, having opened the sluices. Claparon was repeating a lesson that du Tillet had skilfully beaten into him. "The state of his affairs is plain enough; Roguin's failure will yield fifty per cent. dividend, according to what Crottat tells me. Besides this dividend, Monsieur Birotteau will recover the forty thousand francs which the imaginary lender never had; again, he can borrow upon his property. Now, we are not to pay the owners their two hundred thousand francs till four months from now; between this and then, Birotteau will pay his notes, for he could not, in any case, have counted upon what Roguin has made off with, to pay them. But even if he should be a little pinched, why, with a little shinning, he will get safely through."

The perfumer took fresh courage as he listened to

Claparon's analysis of his affairs and to the line of conduct, so to speak, which he traced out for him. His features recovered their firmness and decision, and he formed a high estimate of the abilities of the ex-commercial traveler. Du Tillet had thought best to pass, in Claparon's eyes, for Roguin's dupe. So he had sent one hundred thousand francs by Claparon to Roguin, who straightway gave them back again. Claparon, who was really uneasy, of course played his part naturally, and said to anybody who would listen that Roguin cost him a hundred thousand francs. Du Tillet had not considered Claparon unscrupulous enough ; he believed he had too much honorable principle and delicacy to confide his plans to him in all their bearings ; and he knew him to be incapable of finding them out for himself.

"If our first friend is not our first dupe, we shall not find a second," said he to Claparon, on the day when, being reproached by his commercial go-between, he crushed him like a worn-out instrument.

Monsieur Lebas and Claparon went away together.

"I can extricate myself," Birotteau thought. "My debts in bills payable amount to two hundred and thirty-five thousand francs, to wit ; seventy-five thousand francs for my house and a hundred and seventy-five thousand francs for the lands. Now, to meet these, I have Roguin's dividend, which will perhaps yield a hundred thousand francs. I can cancel the loan on my lands, in all one hundred and forty thousand. What I have to do is to gain a hundred thousand francs by the Cephalic Oil, and to reach by accommodation notes or by credit with a banker, the moment when I shall have repaired the loss, and when the lands have obtained their highest value."

If a man in misfortune can once form a romantic hope, by a train of reasons more or less correct, with which he stuffs a pillow on which to lay his head, he is often saved. Many take the confidence imparted by illusion for energy. Perhaps hope is the half of courage, so the Christian religion has made it a virtue. Has not hope sustained many of the weak, by giving them time to await the accidents of life?

Resolved to go to his wife's uncle, and make known his situation before seeking help elsewhere, Birotteau did not go down the Rue Saint Honoré to the Rue des Bourdonnais without feeling agonies unknown before, and which agitated him so much that he thought his health was affected. His bowels were on fire. In fact, people whose sense is in their diaphragms, suffer there, as people who perceive by the head experience cerebral pains. In great crises, the constitution is attacked in that part where temperament has placed, in that particular individual, the seat of life; weak people have the colic, Napoleon goes to sleep.

Before mounting to the assault of a confidential communication, over all the barriers of pride, a man of honor must have felt in his heart more than once the spur of necessity—that hard rider! So Birotteau allowed himself to be spurred for two days before he would go to his uncle; and his mind was made up at last only in consequence of family reasons; however things might turn out, he would have to explain his situation to the austere ironmonger. Nevertheless, when he reached the door, he felt that utter sinking which every child has experienced on entering a dentist's house; but this want of courage applied to César's whole lifetime, and not to a temporary sorrow. Birotteau went up slowly. He found the old man reading the Constitutionnel by his

fireside, before the little round table upon which his frugal breakfast was spread ; a roll, some butter and cheese, and a cup of coffee.

"A true philosopher," said Birotteau, envying his uncle's life.

"Well," said Pillerault, taking off his spectacles, "I learned yesterday at the café David, of Roguin's affair and the murder of the belle Hollandaise. I hope that as you knew we wanted to be positive owners of the land, you have been to get a receipt from Claparon."

"Alas ! uncle, that's the very point. That's just where the shoe pinches. No."

"Good heavens, you are ruined !" said Pillerault, letting his newspaper drop ; Birotteau picked it up, though it was the Constitutionnel.

Pillerault was so violently affected by his reflections, that his severe medallion-like face became bronzed, like metal under the die ; he stood still, looked through the window at the opposite wall without seeing it, as he listened to Birotteau's long discourse. He evidently heard and was forming an opinion, he weighed the *pros* and the *cons* with the inflexibility of a Minos who had crossed the commercial Styx when he left his store for his little three-pair front.

"Well, uncle ?" said César, who, after having closed by begging Pillerault to sell sixty thousand francs worth of stock, waited for an answer.

"I can't, my poor nephew, you are too deeply compromised. The Ragons and I must both lose our fifty thousand francs. These excellent people sold, by my advice, their shares in the Wortschin mines ; I feel myself obliged, in case of loss, not to restore the capital, indeed, but to aid them, and to aid my neice and Césarine.

You will all of you want bread, perhaps ; you can get it here."

"Bread, uncle?"

"Yes, bread. Look at things as they are ; *you can't recover yourself.* From my income of five thousand six hundred francs, I can spare four thousand to divide between you and the Ragons. I know Césarine ; when the stroke has fallen, she will labor like one distracted ; she will deny herself everything, and you, too, César !"

"Things are not so desperate, uncle."

"I don't see them as you do."

"I will prove the contrary."

"Nothing would please me more."

Birotteau left Pillerault without replying. He nad come to seek consolation and encouragement, but had received a second blow, less violent, indeed, than the first, but instead of hitting him on the head, it struck him in the heart ; and in the heart was the poor man's whole life. He went back after having descended a few steps.

"Sir," said he, in a frigid tone, "Constance knows nothing of this ; at any rate, keep my secret and beg the Ragons not to deprive me, at home, of the tranquility I need to wrestle against misfortune."

Pillerault made a gesture of assent.

"Courage, César," he added, "I see you are vexed with me, but you will do me justice hereafter, when you think of your wife and child."

Discouraged by the opinion of his uncle, whose peculiar lucidity he acknowledged, César fell from the whole height of his hopes into the miry morass of uncertainty. A man whose soul, at a time of great commercial distress, has nothing of the temper of that of Pillerault, becomes the toy of circumstance ; he follows his own

ideas or those of others, as a traveler pursues a will-o'-the-wisp. He allows himself to be carried away by the whirlwind, instead of lying down and hiding his face as it passes, or rising and escaping from it by following its course. In the midst of his distress, Birotteau remembered the suit relative to his loan. He went to the Rue Vivienne, to the office of Derville, his attorney, to commence proceedings as soon as possible, in case the attorney should see any chance of the loan being annulled. The perfumer found Derville by his fireside, wrapped up in his warm white dressing-gown, calm and collected, as lawyers always are when once they have become accustomed to the terrible revelations of their clients. Birotteau for the first time noticed this indispensable coolness, which so freezes the applicant, however excited, wounded, however feverishly agitated by his interests in danger, however painfully compromised in his life, his honor, his wife and children he may be, as Birotteau was, when relating his misfortunes.

"If it is proved," said Derville, after having listened to him, "that the lender no longer had in Roguin's hands the sum that the latter pretends he lent you, then there is ground for a rescission, as there was no giving and receiving of money; the lender will have his remedy in Roguin's bail-bond, as you will for your hundred thousand francs. I answer, in that case, for the suit, as much as a suit can be answered for, for no cause can be won in advance."

The opinion of so able a lawyer gave César some little courage, and he begged Derville to obtain a decision in the coming fortnight. The attorney replied that a decision setting aside the loan might perhaps be obtained in three months.

"In three months!" exclaimed the perfumer, who thought he had found a resource.

"Even supposing that we get the case put speedily on the calendar, we cannot compel our opponent to follow our rate of speed; he will profit by the delays of legal procedure; the lawyers are not always present; who knows your adversary will not allow himself to be condemned by default? We can't always get on as we should like, my dear sir!" said Derville.

"We used to go pretty quick at the tribunal of commerce!"

"Oh," returned the attorney, "consular judges and civil judges are two kinds of judges. You fellows slash through your business. At the Court house we have forms, and forms are the guardians of the law. How would you like a judgment given in hot haste, which condemned you to lose your forty thousand francs? Your adversary, who has that sum at stake, will defend himself. Delays are judicial *chevaux de frise*."

"You are right," said Birotteau, who bade Derville good-day, and went out with despair in his soul.

"They are all right; money, money!" cried the perfumer, talking to himself in the streets as busy men are apt to do in Paris, that turbulent and surging city which a modern poet has called a vat. As he entered, the clerk who had been carrying the bills about, told him that on account of the approach of New Years' Day everybody had torn the receipt off and given it back, keeping the bill.

"So there is no money anywhere," said the perfumer, aloud in the shop.

He bit his lips, for all the clerks had raised their heads to look at him.

Thus five days passed; five days during which Bras-

chon, Lourdois, Thorein, Grindot, Chaffaroux, and the other unpaid creditors, went through the chameleon-like phases that every creditor undergoes until, resigning the state of peace in which confidence has hitherto kept him, he assumes the bloody colors of the Bellona of trade. In Paris, the astringent period of distrust is as rapid in its approach as the expansive movement of trust is slow in taking a start; once fallen into the restrictive system of commercial fears and precautions, the creditor soon becomes so scurvily mean that he is even worse than the debtor. From winning politeness, Birotteau's creditors rose to the heat of impatience, then to the ominous effervescence of importunity, to threatening bursts of disappointment, to the blue cold of determination, and finally to the black insolence of a summons with malice prepence. Braschon, the rich upholsterer of the Faubourg St. Antoine, who had not been invited to the ball, sounded the charge, in his character as a creditor wounded in his pride; he insisted on being paid within twenty-four hours; he demanded a guaranty, not in the form of a deposit of furniture, but a mortgage upon the lands recorded next after the forty thousand francs. In spite of the violence of their exactions, they left Birotteau a few intervals of repose in which to take breath.

Instead of overcoming these first agonies of his difficult position by a vigorous effort of the will, César used all his wits to prevent his wife, the only person who could advise him, from noticing them. He kept guard upon the threshold of his door, and around the shop. He had admitted Cèlestin into the secret of his temporary embarassment, and Célestin observed his master with an eye as curious as it was astonished; in his view, César was dwindling away, as men accustomed to success always do in time of disaster, their whole strength

consisting in the experience which routine gives to minds of mediocre capacity.

Without having the energy and ability necessary to defend himself at so many points of simultaneous attack, Cèsar, nevertheless, had the courage to look his situation in the face. He required, for the end of December and the fifteenth of January, for his house and for his maturing notes, his rents and current obligations, the sum of sixty thousand francs, half of which were for the end of December; all his resources furnished him but twenty thousand, so that he still wanted ten thousand. In this there was nothing desperate, he thought, for he did not see beyond the present, like an adventurer who lives from hand to mouth. Before the rumor of his difficulties reached the public, he resolved to attempt what seemed to him an immense stroke, by applying to the famous François Keller, banker, orator and philanthropist, celebrated for his beneficence and his desire to render service to the trade of Paris, with a view to being permanent member for the city at the Chamber. The banker was a liberal, Birotteau was a royalist; but the perfumer formed an opinion of him according to the dictates of his heart, and saw an additional reason for his obtaining a credit in this difference of political views. In case security should be necessary, he had no doubt of Popinot's eagerness to serve him, and he resolved to ask him for notes to the amount of thirty thousand francs; this would aid him to await the gaining of his law-suit, which was already pledged to the most hungry creditors. The confiding perfumer, who had been wont to tell his dear Constance, upon his pillow, at night, the least emotions of his life, deriving courage from the revelation, and who even sought advice from her contradiction, could speak of his situation

neither to his first clerk, nor to his uncle, nor to his wife. His thoughts thus weighed upon him doubly. But the generous martyr preferred to suffer alone rather than throw such living fire upon his wife's soul; he meant to tell her of the danger when it was passed. He perhaps recoiled from making the horrible confession. The fear with which his wife inspired him gave him courage. He went to mass every morning at Saint Roch, and made God his confidant.

"If I don't meet a soldier going home, my prayer will be heard. It shall be God's answer," he said, after having implored Heaven for aid.

And he was happy in not meeting a soldier. Still his heart was overladen, he wanted another heart into which to pour his grief. Césarine, in whom he had confided at the outset, possessed his entire secret. Mystic glances passed between them, looks full of suppressed despair or hope, prayers breathed with mutual ardor, questions and answers in sympathy, vague gleams of intelligence between soul and soul. With his wife, Birotteau was animated and gay. Did Constance ask him a question, pshaw! everything was progressing famously. Popinot, whom César never thought of, was succeeding, and the oil was selling fast. Claparon's notes would be paid, and there was nothing to fear. This forced gaiety was terrible to behold. When his wife was asleep in her sumptuous bed, César would remain in a sitting posture and fall into a listless contemplation of his misfortunes. Césarine, barefooted and with a shawl over her white shoulders, would sometimes come in, in her night-dress.

"I heard you weeping, papa," she would say, shedding tears herself.

Birotteau sank into such a state of torpor after writing the letter in which he asked the great François

Keller for an audience, that his daughter felt obliged to accompany him about the city. Then for the first time he noticed certain enormous red bills in the streets, and his eye was arrested by these words : CEPHALIC OIL.

While the sun of the Queen of Roses was sinking in the west, the house of Popinot was rising brilliant with the oriental glow of success. Acting upon the advice of Gaudissart and Finot, Anselme had boldly launched his oil upon the sea of public favor. Two thousand show bills had been placarded at the most conspicuous points of Paris, within three days. No one could avoid staring "Cephalic Oil" in the face, or reading one of Finot's terse paragraphs upon the impossibility of forcing the hair to grow and the danger of dyeing it, accompanied by an extract from Vauquelin' spaper read to the Academy of Science s; a genuine warrant of life promised to the defunct hair of those who sho uld employ the Oil. All the hair-dressers, the wig-makers, the perfumers of Paris had ornamented their doors with gilded frames, enclosing a handsome prospectus printed upon vellum, at the top of which was the picture of Hero and Leander, reduced, with this motto : "The ancient people of antiquity preserved their hair by means of Cephalic Oil."

"Why, he has invented permanent frames and everlasting circulars !" said Birotteau, who contemplated the shop front of the Silver Bell in amazement.

"Haven't you seen," said his daughter, "a frame that Monsieur Anselme came and brought himself to the shop, at the same time leaving three hundred bottles of oil with Célestin ?"

"No," said he.

"Célestin has already sold fifty to casuai ana sixty to regular customers !"

"Ah!" said César.

The perfumer, stunned by the thousand bells that poverty rings in the ears of its victims, lived in a state of perpetual giddiness. The day before, Popinot had waited an hour for him, and went away after a conversation with Constance and Césarine, who told him that César was absorbed by his great speculation.

"Ah! yes; the business of the lands."

Happily, Popinot, who for a month had not left the Rue des Cinq Diamants, sitting up at night and working on Sundays in the factory, had seen neither Ragon, nor Pillerault, nor his uncle, the judge. The poor fellow slept only two hours! He had but two clerks, and at the rate things were going, he would soon require four. In trade the occasion is everything. He who does not bestride success and hold on by the mane, lets his fortune escape. Popinot said to himself that he would be cordially received, if, in six months, he could say to his aunt and uncle, "I am saved, my fortune is made!"—cordially received by Birotteau, if he could bring him thirty or forty thousand francs as his share at the end of six months. As he knew nothing of Roguin's flight, of César's disasters and difficulty, he could not make an indiscreet speech to Madame Birotteau.

Popinot promised Finot five hundred francs for each first-rate paper,—and there were ten of them!—three hundred for each second-rate,—and of these also there were ten!—if the Cephalic Oil were noticed three times a month. Finot saw three thousand francs for himself out of these eight thousand—the first stake he had to venture on the great green cloth of speculation! He rushed like a lion at his friends and acquaintances. He lived at that time in the newspaper offices; he glided

to the bedsides of all the editors in the morning ; and in the evening he walked up and down the lobbies of all the theatres.

"Remember my oil, my dear boy ; it's not an affair of mine, it's to oblige a friend, you know ; Gaudissart, a capital fellow !" was the first and last sentence of every discourse.

He seized upon the bottom of the closing columns in the papers, inserting articles and letting the editors have the money for them. As cunning as a supernumerary who aspires to be an actor, active as an errand-boy at sixty francs a month, he wrote plausible letters, he flattered everybody's self-love, he did the dirty work of the editors-in-chief, to get his notices inserted. Money, dinners,—his zealous activity turned everything to account. With tickets for the theatre he bribed the printers who, at midnight, made up the columns, taking, for that purpose, any of the items already in type. On these occasions Finot would pretend to be in the printing office to revise an article he had written. Though friendly to all, he made the Cephalic Oil triumph over Regnauld's Paste and the Brazilian Compound, and over all the inventions which were the first to perceive the influence of the newpapers and the piston-like effect produced upon the public by the reiteration of an article. In this age of innocence, a great many editors were like oxen, they did not know their own strength ; they wrote about actresses, Florine, Tullia, Mariette, and so forth. They lorded it over everything, and got nothing by it. Andoche's ambition lay another way ; he neither wanted to write up an actress nor to get a play acted, nor to have a comedy read, nor to get an article paid for ; he offered money when people wanted it, and proffered a breakfast when somebody was hungry ; so that there

was not a newspaper which did not mention the Cephalic Oil, and its agreement with Vauquelin's analysis, or which did not ridicule those who thought that hair could be induced to grow, and proclaim the danger of dyeing it.

These articles rejoiced Gaudissart's heart, who stocked himself with newspapers to combat people's prejudices, and made upon the provinces what has been called after him, by speculators, a "charge at full speed." At this period the Paris papers ruled the provinces, which were yet without organs, the unfortunates! So they were gravely spelled and studied from the title to the printer's name at the end—a line in which the irony of their persecuted opinions might lie concealed. Gaudissart, supported by the press, was brilliantly successful in the very first city where he wagged his tongue. All the country shop-keepers wanted frames and circulars with the picture of Hero and Leander. Finot attacked Macassar Oil with that delightful jest which so amused the audiences at the Funambules, where Pierrot took an old horse-hair broom, the holes of which were plainly visible, poured Macassar Oil upon it, and made the broom put forth a perfect forest of tufts. This ironical scene excited universal laughter.

Later in life, Finot cheerfully confessed that without these three thousand francs, he should have died of penury and suffering. Three thousand francs were a fortune for him. In this campaign, he was the first to divine the power of advertising, of which he made so extensive and judicious a use. Three months afterwards, he became editor-in-chief of a small paper, which he finally bought and which was the foundation of his fortune. As the "charge at full speed," made by the illustrious Gaudissart, the Murat of traveling agents, upon

the rural districts and the frontiers, secured a commercial triumph for the house of A. Popinot, so it triumphed in public opinion, thanks to Finot's hungry assault upon the newspapers, which produced the remarkable publicity that the Brazilian Compound and Regnauld's Gum shared. At the very outset, this taking of public opinion by storm resulted in three fortunes, and soon engendered an invasion of a thousand ambitious projects descending in thick battalions into the arena of newspapers, where they called paid advertisements into existence—an immense revolution! At this moment, the house of A. Popinot & Co. was emblazoned on every wall and shop front. Unable to measure the effects of such publicity, Birotteau contented himself with saying to Césarine: "This little Popinot is walking in my footsteps!" without comprehending the difference of the times, without appreciating the power of the new agents whose rapidity and extension embraced the commercial world much more rapidly than in former times. Birotteau had not set foot inside his factory since his ball; he knew nothing of the energy and activity there displayed by Popinot. Anselme had taken all Birotteau's workmen; he slept there; he saw Césarine seated upon every box, laid out in every consignment, printed on every invoice; he said: "She shall be my wife," as with coat off and shirt-sleeves rolled up to the elbows, he vigorously drove nails into a case if his clerks happened to be out.

The next day, after having studied all night what he ought and what he ought not to say to one of the great men of the loftier banking interest, César reached the Rue de Houssay, and, though not without dreadful palpitations, approached the house of the liberal banker who

belonged to the party so justly accused of desiring the overthrow of the Bourbons.

The perfumer, like all the minor tradesmen of Paris, knew nothing of the manners and men connected with upper financial circles. In Paris, between these circles and trade, there are secondary, intermediate establishments, useful to the bank, in which it finds an extra guaranty. Constance and Birotteau, who had never exceeded their means, whose till had never been empty, and who kept their notes in their pocket-book, had never had recourse to these second-rate houses ; they were, for a still stronger reason, unknown in high banking regions. Perhaps it is a mistake not to found a credit even if it is useless ; opinions differ on this point. However this may be, Birotteau was very sorry that he had never uttered his signature. But, being known as a deputy and a political character, he thought his name alone a sufficient introduction ; he was ignorant of the almost royal concourse which distinguished this banker's audiences. When he was conducted to the salon which adjoined the cabinet of a man celebrated on so many accounts, Birotteau found himself in the midst of a large assemblage, composed of deputies, writers, journalists, stock-brokers, heavy tradesmen, business people, engineers, and a number of intimate persons who passed through the groups and knocked in a peculiar manner at the door of the cabinet, which they entered as privileged characters. " What am I in the midst of this machine ?" Birotteau thought, quite stunned by the movement of this intellectual forge, where the daily bread of the opposition was baked, and where all the parts of the great tragic-comedy played by the Left were rehearsed. On his right hand he heard people discussing the loan for finishing the chief lines of canals

proposed by the bureau of Bridges and Roads, and for this, millions were required ! On his left, journalists, eager to flatter the banker's pride, were talking over last night's sitting and their master's unpremeditated speech. During two hours waiting, Birotteau saw the political banker three times conduct men of distinction three paces beyond the door of his own cabinet. François Keller went as far as the ante-chamber with the last, General Foy.

"I am lost," thought Birotteau with an aching heart.

When the banker returned to his cabinet, the troop of courtiers, friends, and interested persons assailed him like dogs courting a pretty bitch. Several bold curs got into the sanctuary in spite of him. The conferences lasted five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour. Some went away depressed, others put on an appearance of satisfaction, or assumed airs of importance. Time was flying ; Birotteau anxiously watched the clock. No one took the least notice of his hidden grief, which was sighed out on a gilded chair by the side of the fire, at the door of the cabinet wherein lodged the universal panacea—credit ! Mournfully César reflected how for one moment he had been a king in his own house, as this man was a king every day, and he fathomed the depth of the abyss into which he had fallen.

Bitter thought ! How many tears were driven back during the hour he spent there ! How often did Birotteau implore God to make this man favorable ; for beneath his thick covering of plausible popularity, César thought he discovered an insolence, a passionate, tyrannical spirit, a brutal desire of domination, which was hateful to his own gentle soul. At length, when there were not more than ten or twelve persons remaining, Birotteau resolved that when the outer door of the

cabinet opened, he would get up and put himself on a level with the great orator, by saying to him: "My name is Birotteau!" The grenadier who was the first to rush upon the redoubt on the banks of the Moskowa displayed no more courage than Birotteau summoned to his aid to carry out this manœuvre.

"After all, I am his deputy," said he, as he rose to make known his name.

The features of François Keller relaxed; he evidently desired to be amiable; he looked at the perfumer's red ribbon, drew back, opened the door of his cabinet, showed him the way, and remained some time talking with two persons who shot at him from the stairs with the violence of a waterspout.

"Decazes wants to speak to you," said one of the two.

"It's about killing off the Marsan pavillion! The king has got his eyes open; he coming over to our side," exclaimed the other.

"We will go to the Chamber together," said the banker, as he resumed his attitude of the frog imitating the ox.

"How can he attend to his affairs?" Birotteau asked himself, quite amazed.

The sun of superior position dazzled the perfumer, as a bright light blinds insects that like a sombre day or the half darkness of a fine night. On an immense table he perceived the budget, the thousand blue-books of the Chamber, volumes of the *Moniteur* opened, consulted, and marked, in order to taunt a minister with his former words, now forgotten, and to make him recant, amidst the applause of an ignorant crowd, incapable of understanding that everything is modified according to circumstances. On another table, were boxes piled up,

bills, prospectuses, the thousand and one projects furnished a man into whose funds every budding speculation sought to thrust its finger. The regal luxury of this cabinet, full of pictures, of statuettes, of works of art; the heavily laden chimney-piece, the collection of papers relating to foreign or home interests, bound up like bales, all this struck Birotteau, made him shrink back, increased his terror and chilled his blood. On the desk of François Keller lay files of notes, of bills of exchange, of commercial circulars. Keller sat down and set to work, rapidly signing such letters as did not require examination.

"Sir, to what am I indebted for the honor of your visit?" he said.

At these words, pronounced for his hearing alone by the voice which often spoke to Europe, whilst his eager hand traveled over the papers, the poor perfumer felt as if a hot iron had entered his heart. He put on that agreeable expression which for ten years the banker had seen assumed by those who sought to involve him in an affair important to themselves alone, and which at once put him on his guard against them.

So François Keller cast a look upon César which went straight through his head—a Napoleonic look. The imitation of Napoleon's look was an absurdity in which a few parvenus, who had never been even the small copper change of their emperor, at this time indulged. Upon Birotteau, a man of the Right, a fanatical devotee of the existing power, an element of monarchical election, this glance fell like the lead stamp of the custom-house upon a bale of merchandize.

"Sir, I do not wish to trespass upon your time, so let me be brief. My business is purely commercial, to inquire whether your house will furnish me a credit. As

I was formerly judge in the tribunal of commerce, and well known at the bank, you will see at once that if I had my portfolio full, I should have nothing to do but to apply at the institution of which you are a regent. I had the honor of sitting at the tribunal with the baron Thibon, head of the discounting board, and he certainly would not refuse me. But I have never made use of my credit or my signature; my signature, so to speak, is virgin, and you know how difficult a negotiation is under such circumstances—"

Keller made a movement with his head which Birotteau took for one of impatience. "The case is this, sir," he resumed. "I have entered into a speculation in land, outside of my business—"

François Keller, who was still signing and reading, without appearing to listen to César, turned his head and made a sign of assent which encouraged him. Birotteau thought he was getting on famously, and drew a long breath.

"Go on, I am listening," said Keller, kindly.

"I am half-purchaser of the lands lying around the Madeleine."

"Yes, I have heard this immense undertaking of the house of Claparon spoken of at Nucingen's."

"Well," said the perfumer, "a credit of one hundred thousand francs, secured by my half of the operation or by my stock in trade, would be sufficient to carry me along to the time when I shall be realizing large profits from an invention in my own line of business. Should it be necessary, I will further secure you by the notes of a new house, that of Popinot & Co., a young house which—"

Keller seemed to care very little about the house of Popinot, and Birotteau saw that he was on the wrong

track ; he stopped, and then, alarmed at the silence, he resumed : " As to the interest, we—"

" Dear me, yes," said the banker, " if the affair can be arranged, don't doubt my desire to assist you. Occupied as I am—for I have the finances of all Europe on my shoulders, and the Chamber takes all my time—you will not be astonished to learn that I leave a great many matters to be investigated by my clerks. Go and see my brother Adolphe down-stairs, explain the nature of your guaranties to him ; if he approves of the operation, return with him to-morrow or the day after to-morrow at the hour when I give matters a final examination—at five in the morning. We shall be proud and happy to have obtained your confidence, for you are one of those consistent royalists from whom one may differ in politics, but whose esteem is always flattering—"

" Sir," said the perfumer, elated by this parliamentary speech, " I am as worthy of the honor which you do me as of the distinguished and royal favor—I deserved it by sitting in the consular tribunal and in fighting—".

" Yes," returned the banker, " the reputation which you enjoy is a passport, Monsieur Birotteau. You can hardly propose other than feasible affairs, you may count on our co-operation."

A lady, Madame Keller, one of the two daughters of the Count de Gondreville, opened a door that Birotteau had not seen.

" My love, I hope to see you before you go to the Chamber," she said.

" Two o'clock !" cried the banker ; " the struggle has begun ; excuse me, sir, I have to overthrow the ministry. Go and see my brother."

He re-conducted the perfumer to the door of the salon,

and said to one of his servants: "Take this gentleman to Monsieur Adolphe."

Crossing a labyrinth of staircases under the guidance of a man in livery towards a cabinet less ornamental but more useful than that of the head of the firm, the perfumer, mounted on an *if*, hope's easiest steed, stroked his chin and thought the compliments of the celebrated financier of very good omen. He regretted that an enemy of the Bourbons was so gracious, so able and so fine an orator.

Full of these illusions, he entered a bare, cold cabinet, furnished with two writing-desks and several miserable arm-chairs, with very dirty curtains and a thin carpet. This cabinet was to the other what a kitchen is to the dining-room, a labaratory to the shop. Here banking and commercial affairs were ripped open for examination, here projects were analyzed, and here the share of the firm in all the profits of promising operations was eagerly seized upon. Here the bold strokes for which the Kellers were famous in the upper spheres of finance were prepared, by which they often created a monopoly and rapidly profited by it. Here the defects of legislation were studied, and here what the Exchange calls the "glutton's shares," were shamelessly agreed upon,—the commissions exacted for the slightest service, such as giving weight and credit to a project by lending their name. Here were planned those schemes which, with a treacherous appearance of lawfulness, consist in becoming silent partners in dubious undertakings, without engagement in writing, and, if successful, in killing them off in order to get possession of them by demanding the capital back at a critical moment—a horrible manœuvre which has ruined stockholders without number.

The two brothers had their separate parts to play.

Up-stairs, François, a brilliant and wary man, conducted himself like a king, distributed his favors and his promises, and made himself agreeable to all. With him everything was easy, he had a lofty style of entering into business schemes, he intoxicated young beginners and speculators of recent date with the wine of his favor and his heady conversation, as he developed and enlarged upon their own ideas. Down-stairs, Adolphe excused his brother on the score of his political pre-occupations and skilfully passed the rake over the table; this was the compromised, the difficult brother, as distinguished from François. Thus, to close a bargain with this perfidious house, a man needed two promises. The gracious Yes of the sumptuous boudoir often became a dry No in Adolphe's little office. This suspensory manœuvre gave them an opportunity for reflection, and often served to mystify inexperienced competitors. The banker's brother was talking with the famous Palma, the private counselor of the house of Keller, who withdrew as the perfumer appeared. When Birotteau had explained his business, Adolphe, the shrewdest of the two brothers, a very wolf of speculation, with sharp eyes, thin lips, and a rough complexion, bent down his head and looked over his spectacles at Birotteau, staring at him with what might be called the banker's stare, which is half vulture and half attorney; it is at once greedy and indifferent, clear and obscure, sparkling and sombre.

"Be good enough to send me the papers on which the affair of the Madeleine is based," he said; "there lies our guaranty for any account we might open with you; we must examine them before opening such an account and discussing our respective shares. If the scheme is a good one, we might, in order not to encumber you, take a portion of the profits instead of a discount."

"Well," said Birotteau to himself as he went home, "I see what it will come to. Like the hunted beaver, I must leave a piece of my skin behind me. But it is better to be shorn than to die."

He went up-stairs to his room in high good humor, and his spirits, on that day, were genuine.

"I am all right," he said to Césarine, "I am to have a credit with the Kellers."

It was not until the 29th of December that Birotteau was able to enter the office of Adolphe Keller again. The first time that he presented himself, Adolphe had gone to visit an estate six leagues from Paris, which the great orator thought of purchasing. The second time, both the Kellers were engaged for the morning in calculating relative to the taking of a loan which had been proposed to the Chambers; they begged Monsieur Birotteau to call again on the following Friday. These delays were well nigh fatal to the perfumer. But Friday came at last. Birotteau found himself in the private office, seated on one side of the fire, in the light of the window, with Adolphe Keller on the other side.

"This is all very well," said the banker, handing back to him the papers, "but what have you paid upon the sums stipulated for the lots?"

"One hundred and forty thousand francs."

"In money?"

"In notes."

"Are they paid?"

"They are not yet due."

"But if you have paid too much for the lands, considering their present value, where is our security? It would be nothing more than the good opinion the public has of you and the consideration you enjoy. Now, business does not rest upon sentiment. If you had paid

two hundred thousand francs, and if we suppose that one hundred thousand francs too much has been given, in order to take possession of the land, why then we should have a security of one hundred thousand francs to answer for one hundred thousand discounted. It would result in our being owners of your share, if we paid instead of you ; so we come to the question whether the speculation is a good one. Now, as to waiting five years to double our money, we think it more profitable to use it in our ordinary banking business. So many things may turn up ! You want to sign notes in order to pay other notes coming due. A dangerous operation, sir ! You'd better hesitate before you make such a jump as that. The thing won't do."

This sentence struck Birotteau as if the executioner had placed the branding iron upon his shoulder ; he hardly knew what he did.

"Come," said Adolphe, "my brother feels a lively interest in you, and has spoken of you to me. Let us look into your affairs," he added.

Birotteau now became Molineux, whom he had so complacently ridiculed. César, dallied with by the banker, who amused himself with unraveling the poor man's tangled thoughts, and who was as skilful in interrogating a merchant as was Judge Popinot in making a criminal talk, recounted his various speculations ; he introduced the Concentrated Sultana Paste, the Carminative Water, Roguin's fraud, and his suit relative to his imaginary loan, not a sou of which had he ever received. Birotteau noticed Keller's smiling and reflective manner, and his shrewd nods of the head, and said to himself, "He's listening ! I've interested him ! I shall get my credit !" Adolphe Keller was laughing at Birotteau as Birotteau had laughed at Molineux. Car-

ried away by the loquacity peculiar to people who allow themselves to be intoxicated by misfortune, César exhibited Birotteau as he was, and gave his own measure in proposing the Cephalic Oil and the house of Popinot, his last stake, as security for his credit. The simple creature, led on by beguiling hope, allowed himself to be probed and cross-examined by Keller, who discovered in the perfumer a royalist flat on the eve of failure. Delighted at the idea of seeing a deputy mayor of their ward, a man but lately honored with the cross, a partizan of the present dynasty, bankrupt, Adolphe told Birotteau plainly that he would neither give him a credit nor say a word in his favor to his brother François, the great orator. If François were so weak in his generosity as to assist people who held opinions contrary to his own, and political enemies, he, Adolphe, would oppose, with all his strength, his acting the part of a dupe, and would prevent him from aiding a former adversary of Napoleon—one who had been wounded at Saint Roch. Birotteau, exasperated, tried to say something about the avidity of the wealthier bankers, their harshness, their false philanthropy ; but he was seized by so violent a pain that he could barely stammer forth a few phrases upon the institution of the Bank of France, to whose coffers the Kellers had access.

"But the bank," said Adolphe Keller, "will never give a discount which a private banker has refused."

"The bank," returned Birotteau, "has always seemed to me far from fulfilling the purpose for which it was intended, when it takes credit to itself, upon presenting the account of its profits, for having lost but one or two hundred thousand francs by the tradespeople of Paris ; it is their natural guardian."

Adolphe smiled and rose with the air of a man con-

siderably bored. "If the bank," he said, "were to undertake to furnish means to people embarrassed in their affairs, in the most dishonest and slippery market of the financial world, it would have to shut up before a year was out. It has already as much as it can do to keep clear of accommodation notes and fictitious paper; what would become of it, if it were obliged to investigate the affairs of all those who wanted aid?"

"Where can I get the ten thousand francs that I need for to-morrow, Saturday, the 30th?" said Birotteau to himself as he crossed the court-yard.

According to custom, payments for "the end of the month" are made on the 30th when the 31st is a holiday.

On reaching the door, his eyes bathed in tears, the perfumer saw, though through a mist, a fine English horse in foam stop short at the gate with one of the prettiest gigs behind him that rolled, at that period, upon the streets of Paris. He would have been very glad had this gig run over him; he would have met his death by accident, and the confusion in his business would have been attributed to this event. He did not recognize du Tillet, who, gracefully slim and clad in an elegant morning attire, tossed the ribbons to his groom, and threw a cover over the back of his smoking full-blooded horse.

"What chance brings you here?" he said to his former employer.

Du Tillet knew well enough without asking. The Kellers had made inquiries respecting Birotteau of Claparon, who, after having consulted du Tillet, completely demolished the perfumer's long-established reputation. Though suddenly checked, the tears of the poor tradesman spoke forcibly in his behalf.

"You've not been asking a service of these Arabs, have you?" said du Tillet, "these commercial cut-throats, who have so often resorted to infamous tricks, such as raising the price of indigo after having bought it all up, lowering the price of rice so as to force holders to sell cheap and thus control the market, these atrocious, these faithless, lawless, soulless pirates? You can't know what they are capable of! They'll give you credit if you have got a good idea, and will shut you off when you are involved in the complications of the scheme, and force you to sell out to them at a ruinous price. Hâvre, Bordeaux and Marseilles tell queer stories about them. Politics is the cloak with which they cover their turpitudes. So I get what I can out of them without scruple. Suppose we take a little stroll, my dear Birotteau. Joseph, walk my horse up and down, he's too warm. Three thousand francs make quite a capital." And he walked towards the boulevard. "Now, my dear master, for you have been my master, are you in need of money? The wretches asked you for security, I suppose. Come, I, who know you, I will advance you money on your bare signature. I have honorably made my fortune, but with unheard-of difficulty. I went to seek it—this fortune of mine—in Germany! I may now safely tell you that I bought up claims against the prince who is now king, at sixty per cent. off, and that at that time your being my bondsman was a great advantage to me, and I am not ungrateful. If you want ten thousand francs, they are at your service."

"What, du Tillet," cried César, "are you in earnest? Are you not joking? Well, I am a little embarrassed, but it is only temporary."

"I know, Roguin's affair," replied du Tillet. "I am in myself for ten thousand francs that the old rogue

borrowed of me to get away with. But Madame Roguin will return me the amount from such property of her own as she may recover. I have dissuaded the poor lady from any such folly as paying, from her private resources, debts incurred for a courtezan ; it might be well enough if she could pay them all, but how can she prefer certain creditors to the detriment of others ? You are not a Roguin," added du Tillet, "I know that you would rather blow your brains out than wrong me of a sou. Here we are in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin ; come up-stairs to my quarters."

The parvenu afforded himself the gratification of taking his former employer through his rooms rather than conducting him at once to the office, and he led him along slowly, that he might see his sumptuous dining-room, decorated with pictures he had bought in Germany, and two parlors furnished with an elegance and taste which César had seen only at the Duke de Lenoncourt's. The poor man's eyes were fairly dazzled by the gildings, the works of art, the precious vases, the costly trifles, and the thousand little details which put to the blush the luxuries of Constance's apartment ; and knowing what price his own folly had cost him, he said to himself, " Where can he have got so many millions ?"

He entered a bedroom which seemed, next to that of Madame Birotteau, what the palace of a queen of the ballet is to the three-pair back of a supernumerary. The ceiling, draped with violet-colored satin, was relieved by walls hung with white satin. An ermine bedside-rug stood out sharply against the purple hues of an eastern carpet. The furniture and accessories were of new forms and extravagant finish. The perfumer stopped before a beautiful clock representing Cupid and Psyche, the model of which had been made for a cele-

brated banker, du Tillet having obtained the only copy existing besides that of his fellow-financier. At last the ex-master and the ex-clerk came to an elegant, coquettish cabinet or boudoir, fit only for an exquisite, and redolent rather of love than of finance. It was Madame Roguin, doubtless, who, in return for the care he had taken of her fortune, had given him this chiseled gold paper-cutter, these sculptured malachite presse-papiers, and all the costly knicknacks indicating unbridled luxury. The carpet, one of the richest products of Belgium, astonished the eye as much as it surprised the feet, by the downy depths of its luxurious nap. Du Tillet sat the poor man down by the fireplace—dazzled, amazed, confounded.

"Suppose you breakfast with me?"

He rang the bell. A valet better dressed than Birotteau answered it.

"Ask Monsieur Legras to come up stairs, and then tell Joseph, whom you will find at Keller's door, to come home. Go in to Adolphe Keller's and say that instead of calling for him I will wait for him till 'Change hour. Have breakfast served, and right away!"

These orders stupefied the perfumer.

"Here is Du Tillet sending for that formidable Adolphe Keller, and whistling to him like a dog, bless my soul!" he thought.

A tiger, hardly as big as your fist, came and unfurled, so to speak, a table so small that Birotteau had not noticed it, and placed upon it a pâté de foie gras, a bottle of Bordeaux and all those rare delicacies which were only seen at Birotteau's twice a quarter, on grand occasions. Du Tillet enjoyed the scene. His hatred for the only man who possessed the right to despise him was basking so hotly in the prospect before him that Birot-

teau gave him a sensation as profound as the spectacle of a sheep struggling with a tiger would have done. A momentary feeling of generosity touched his heart; and he asked himself whether his vengeance was not satiated, and he hesitated between the promptings of his awakening clemency and those of his slumbering detestation.

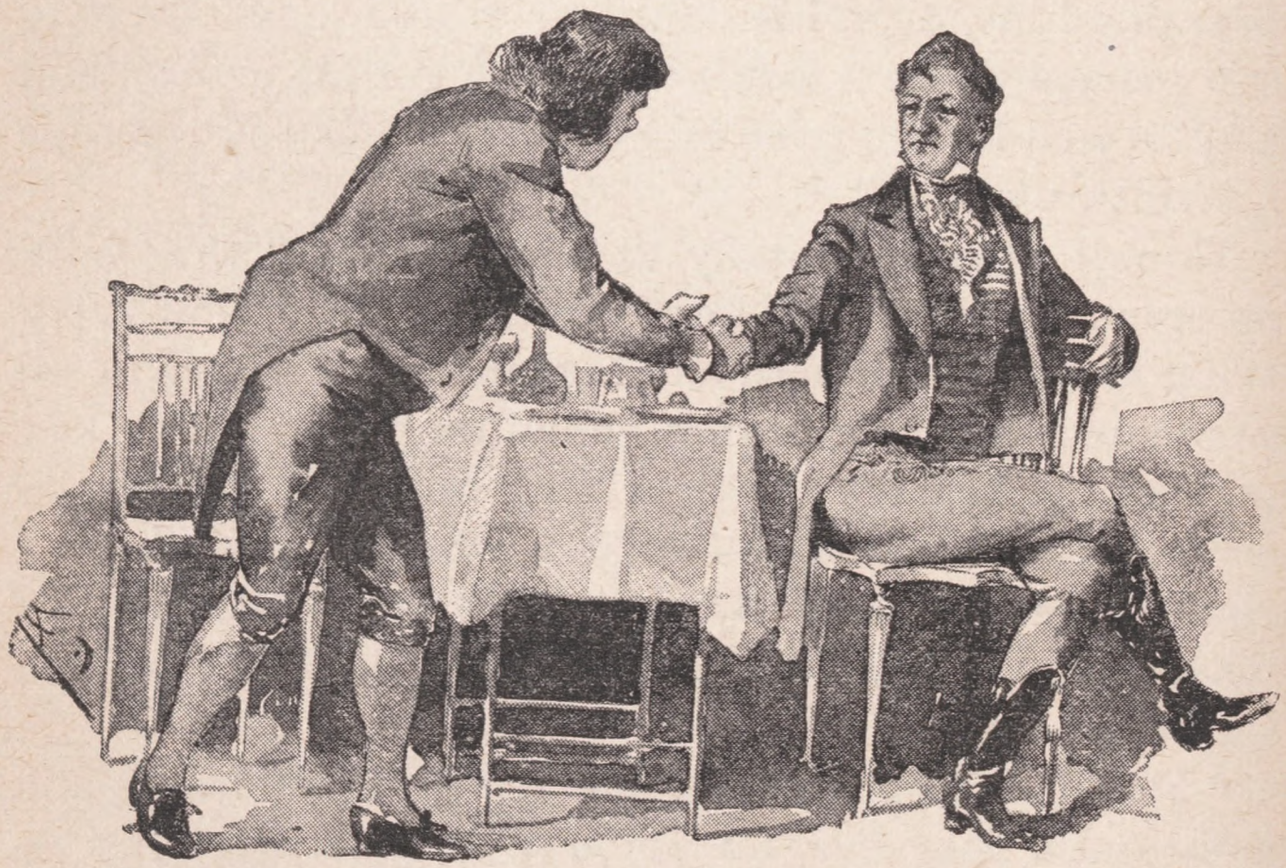
"I can destroy this man as a trader," he thought; "I hold the right of life and death over him, over his wife, who jilted me, over his daughter whose hand not long ago seemed to me a fortune. I have got his money, and may as well let the poor fool drift at the end of the rope I shall throw him."

Honest men are totally deficient in tact; they have no standard in well-doing, because in their view every thing is straightforward and ingenuous. Birotteau consummated his misfortunes, unwittingly irritated and pierced the heart of the tiger, and rendered him implacable by one word, and that a word of praise—by a virtuous expression, by the very simplicity of his uprightness. When the cashier came, du Tillet pointed César out to him.

"Monsieur Legras, bring me ten thousand francs and make out a note for that amount, at ninety days, payable to my order, to be signed by this gentleman; you know who he is, Monsieur César Birotteau."

Du Tillet served some pâté and poured out a glass of wine for the perfumer, who, finding himself saved, gave way to numerous convulsive laughs; he caressed his watch-chain, and never once put a mouthful into his mouth except when his late clerk said, 'You are not eating!" Birotteau thus revealed the depth of the abyss into which the hand of du Tillet had plunged him, from which it now released him, and into which it might hurl

him back again. When the cashier returned, and César, having signed the note, felt the ten bills in his pocket, he could no longer contain himself. A moment before, his neighborhood and the Bank of France were soon to learn that he had stopped payment, and he was to confess his ruin to his wife; now, all was set to rights! His joy in his deliverance was equal in intensity to his



torture in adversity. In spite of him his eyes filled with tears.

"Why, what's the matter, my dear master?" said du Tillet. "Would not you do for me to-morrow what I do for you to-day? It's as natural as How d'ye do!"

"Du Tillet," said Birotteau, emphatically and gravely, at the same time rising and taking his late clerk's hand, "I give you back my esteem."

"Why, did you take it away?" asked du Tillet, feeling that Birotteau had struck home, and that he was hit in the very source of his prosperity, and actually blushing.

"Oh, I didn't exactly take it away," said the perfumer, thunderstruck at his blunder, "but people had talked about your connection with Madame Roguin, and of course, you know, another man's wife—"

"That's right, flounder away, my boy," thought du Tillet, and as he thought, he returned to his first idea, that of destroying the tradesman's honor, trampling it under foot, and rendering altogether contemptible, in the Paris market, the upright and honorable citizen who had detected him with his hand in the money-bag. All the examples of hatred, whether political or private, whether between women or between men, spring from nothing else than a surprise similar to this. Men do not hate for a compromised estate, for a wound or even for a blow; for all these, reparation may be made. But to have been caught in the very act of stealing! The duel which follows between the criminal and the witness of the crime can end only in the death of the one or the other.

"Oh, as to Madame Roguin," said du Tillet, scoffingly, "I should think such a thing would rather be a feather in a young man's cap. I understand, my dear Birotteau, you have been told probably that she had lent me money. Now, on the contrary, I am reëstablishing her fortune, which was singularly involved in her husband's affairs. The source of my wealth is pure, as I told you just now. I began with nothing, you know. Young men are often in the most frightful misery. They can slide down very gently plump into the lap of penury. But suppose a man has made forced loans, like the

republic, he can return them, and then he is more honest than France."

"That's true," said Birotteau. "My boy, God—But is it not Voltaire who says :

'He made of repentance the virtue of man.'"

"Provided," replied du Tillet, probed again to the quick by this quotation, "provided he does not basely and shamefully run off with his neighbor's money, as, for instance, if you were to fail within three months, and my ten thousand francs were swamped."

"I fail!" said Birotteau, who had swallowed three glasses of wine and who was intoxicated with joy. "You know my opinions about failure! Failure is the death of a tradesman ; I should die!"

"Here's to your health, then," said du Tillet.

"To your posterity," returned the perfumer. "Why do you not supply your toilet stand from my shop?"

"I am willing to confess," replied du Tillet, "I am afraid of Madame César ; I can't get over the impression she made upon me, and if you had not been my employer, upon my word, I don't know but—"

"Well, you are not the first to acknowledge her beauty, and a great many would have been glad to have her, but she loves me, you see! Now, look here, du Tillet, my good fellow, don't do things half way."

"What do you mean?"

Birotteau explained the affair of the lots to du Tillet, who opened his eyes wide and complimented the perfumer upon his penetration and his foresight, at the same time highly praising the operation.

"I am delighted that you approve of it, du Tillet, for you are considered one of the knowing ones in the

banking line. My good fellow, you can get me a credit at the Bank of France, while I am waiting for returns from my Cephalic Oil."

"I can give you a letter to the house of Nucingen," replied du Tillet, determined to put his victim through every figure in the Bankrupt's Quadrille.

Ferdinand sat down at his desk and wrote the following letter :

"To the Baron de Nucingen, Paris.

My dear Baron :—

The bearer of this letter is Monsieur César Birotteau, deputy mayor of the second ward, and one of the most famous of Parisian perfumers ; he desires to enter into business relations with you. Pray do, with full confidence, whatever he asks ; in obliging him, you will oblige

Your friend,

F. du TILLET."

Du Tillet did not dot the *i* in his name. Persons with whom he transacted business understood this voluntary error as a signal agreed upon between them. The most earnest recommendations, the warmest and most pressing solicitations in his letters, had, in this case, no meaning. Such a letter, in which exclamation points begged and du Tillet went down upon his knees, were to be regarded as having been given upon powerful considerations ; he had not been able to withhold it ; but it was to be treated as if it had not been received. The recipient, on seeing the *i* undotted, was to give the postulant the cold shoulder. Very many men of the world and the most influential, too, are thus bamboozled like children, by business men, bankers, lawyers, all of whom have double signatures, the one dead, the other

living. The sharpest are thus hoodwinked. The effect of this ruse will be readily understood by those who have had occasion to observe the two-fold action of a cold, and of a warm, letter.

"You are my savior, du Tillet," cried Birotteau, on reading the letter.

"Go and ask Nucingen for money," returned du Tillet, "and when he has read my letter he'll give you as much as you want. My own funds are unfortunately locked up for a few days; if it wasn't for that, I should not send you to this prince of bankers, for the Kellers are mere pigmies by the side of the Baron de Nucingen. Law has reappeared in Nucingen's person. My letter will set you right for the 15th of January, and after that we'll see another time. Nucingen and I are the best friends in the world, and he wouldn't disoblige me for a million."

"It's as good as an endorsement," said Birotteau to himself, as he went away quite penetrated with gratitude towards du Tillet. "Well, one good turn deserves another." And he philosophized thereupon out of sight and hearing. One thought, however, embittered his happiness. He had, indeed, prevented his wife from looking into the books for several days; he had thrown the entire charge of the accounts upon Célestin, aiding him himself from time to time, and had given as a reason his desire that his wife and daughter should enjoy the fine suite of apartments he had arranged and furnished for them; but, when the novelty should be over, Madame Birotteau would rather die than give up looking into the details of the shop, and holding, as she termed it, the handle of the frying pan. Birotteau had exhausted his resources; he had employed every possible artifice to conceal from his wife the symptoms of his

embarrassment. Constance had severely censured the sending out of the bills, she had scolded the clerks and accused Célestin of a desire to ruin the house, thinking the idea exclusively his ; Célestin, by Birotteau's order, quietly let himself be scolded. Madame César, in the clerk's eyes, managed the perfumer ; for it is possible to deceive the public, but not the people of a house, in reference to the real superiority of a husband or wife in a household. Birotteau must now confess his situation to his wife, for his account with du Tillet would require justification. On entering the shop, Birotteau shuddered as he saw Constance behind the counter, verifying the book of Bills Payable, and doubtless adding up the amount of available funds.

"What are you going to pay with to-morrow?" she whispered as he sat down by her side.

"With money," he answered, drawing forth the bank-notes, and beckoning Célestin to come and take them.

"Where did they come from ?"

"I'll tell you this evening. Célestin, enter a note given to du Tillet's order, for ten thousand francs, payable the 31st of March."

"Du Tillet !" repeated Constance, terrified.

"I'll go and see Popinot," said César. "It's wrong in me not to have made him a visit in his new quarters. Is any of his oil sold ?"

"The three hundred bottles he sent us are gone."

"Birotteau, don't go out, I want to speak to you," said Constance, taking him by the arm and dragging him into her chamber with a precipitation which, under any other circumstances, would have been ludicrous. "Du Tillet," she said, when she had assured herself that she was alone with her husband and Césarine, "Du Tillet, who robbed us of three thousand francs ! You

are doing business with du Tillet, a wretch—who tried to seduce me !" she added in a whisper.

"A youthful folly," said Birotteau, in a sudden fit of strong-mindedness.

"Birotteau, there's something wrong, I know ; your affairs seem out of order, and you don't go any more to the factory ; tell me what the matter is, I insist upon knowing."

"Well," said Birotteau, "we have been on the brink of ruin, we still were this morning, but all is right now."

And he narrated the horrible history of the fortnight.

"So that's the cause of your illness," cried Constance.

"Yes, mamma," exclaimed Césarine. "Father has borne up against it so courageously, you can't think. I only hope some one will love me as he loves you. He thought of nothing but of your sorrow."

"My dream is fulfilled," said the poor woman, dropping into an easy chair by the side of the fire, pale, haggard, and thoroughly alarmed. "I foresaw it all. I told you on that fatal night, in our old bedroom that you have torn down, that we should have nothing left but our eyes to weep with. My poor Césarine, I—"

"There you go," cried Birotteau. "Isn't that the way to take away the courage that I so much need."

"Pardon me, César," said Constance, taking his hand and pressing it with an affection which went to the poor man's very heart. "I was wrong. Misfortune has come upon us, but I will be silent, resigned, and energetic. You shall never hear a complaint from me." She threw herself into César's arms, and said, through her tears, "Courage, my dear husband, courage ! If necessary, I'll have courage for both of us."

"My oil, wife, my oil will save us."

"May heaven protect us," said Constance.

"Won't Anselme come to father's assistance?" asked Césarine.

"I am going to see him," said César, violently affected by the heart-rending accent of his wife, who was not entirely known to him yet, even after nineteen years of married life. "Have no fear, Constance. Here, read du Tillet's letter to Monsieur de Nucingen, we are sure of a credit. Between now and then I shall have won my suit. Besides," he added, telling a necessary fib, "there is uncle Pillerault, so all we have to do is to take courage."

"If that's all, it's easy enough," said Constance, smiling.

Birotteau, relieved of a heavy weight, walked like a man newly released from confinement, though he felt within that inexplicable exhaustion which follows a violent moral struggle, in which more nervous fluid, more will, is expended than in an entire ordinary day, and in which, so to speak, the very capital of existence is infringed upon. Birotteau had already grown old.

The house of A. Popinot, in the Rue des Cinq Diamants, had changed considerably during the last two months. The shop had been freshly painted. The shelves, newly touched up and filled with phials, rejoiced the eye of the trader, familiar as he was with the outward signs of prosperity. The floor was encumbered with packing paper. In the store-room were kegs of different oils, the agency for which had been obtained for Popinot by the devoted Gaudissart. The books, the accounts and the till were up-stairs, over the shop and the back-shop. An old cook kept house for Popinot and his three clerks. Popinot, shut up in a corner of the shop and in a sort of counting-room enclosed by

glass, appeared in a coarse serge apron, with double sleeves of green cloth, and a pen behind his ear, when he was not deep in a pile of papers, as he was when Birotteau arrived; being then engaged in reading the mail, which was well filled with drafts and orders. At the words, "Well, my boy!" uttered by his late employer, he raised his head, locked up his cubby, and came forth with a joyous air, and with the end of his nose quite red. There was no fire in the shop, the door of which was open.

"I was afraid you were never coming," returned Popinot, respectfully.

The clerks gathered round to see the great light of perfumery, the deputy with the ribbon, the partner of their master. This mute homage flattered the perfumer. Birotteau, lately so humble at the Kellers, felt a desire to imitate them; he stroked his chin, bobbed consequentially upon his heels and toes, and gave utterance to numerous commonplaces.

"Well, my boy, do you get up early, here?" he asked.

"No, for we do not always go to bed," said Popinot; "we must keep a tight hold of success."

"What did I say? My oil is a fortune."

"Yes, sir, but the manner in which we work it is something, too. I have set the diamond well."

"Talking of that," said the perfumer, "where are we, pecuniarily? Any profit yet?"

"At the end of a month," cried Popinot, "how can you expect it? Gaudissart has only been gone twenty-five days, and he took a post chaise without letting me know it. Oh, he's a zealous one, and we owe uncle a great deal! The newspapers," he added in Birotteau's ear, "will cost us twelve thousand francs."

"The newspapers!" exclaimed the deputy.

"Haven't you read them?"

"No."

"Then you know nothing about it," said Popinot. "Twenty thousand francs worth of placards, frames and printing! A hundred thousand bottles bought! For the present, it is all sacrifice and no profit. We are manufacturing upon a large scale. If you had been to the Faubourg, where I have often spent the whole night, you would have seen a small nut-cracker invented by me, which isn't at all worm-eaten! As for me, I have made ten thousand francs in five days, in commissions upon druggists' oils alone."

"What a fine head!" said Birotteau, placing his hand upon Popinot's hair, and stirring it up as if Anselme had been an unweaned infant. "I knew it all the while." Several persons entered the shop. "We all dine together, Sunday, at your aunt Ragon's," said Birotteau, who left Popinot to attend to his business, on discovering that the fresh meat he had come to smell of was not yet cut up. "It is really extraordinary, a clerk who gets to be a tradesman in twenty-four hours," thought Birotteau, who could no more comprehend the success and coolness of Popinot, than he could the luxurious habits of du Tillet. "Anselme put on a sort of pretentious air, when I placed my hand on his head, as if he were already François Keller."

It had not occurred to Birotteau that the clerks were looking at him, and that the head of a household must preserve his dignity at home. At Popinot's, as at du Tillet's, the good man had committed a blunder from pure goodness of heart; and his failure to restrain the awkward expression of a genuine feeling would have wounded any one else but Anselme.

This Sunday dinner at the Ragons was destined to be the last joy of the nineteen happy years of Birotteau's married life, a joy otherwise complete. Ragon occupied a second story in the Rue du Petit-Bourbon-Saint-Sulpice, in an antique house of highly decent appearance. It was an old suite of rooms, the walls of which were divided into panels where shepherdesses danced in basket skirts and the sheep of the eighteenth century browsed ; a period whose grave and serious bourgeoisie, with their curious manners, their respect for the nobility and devotion for the sovereign and the church, were admirably represented by the Ragons. The furniture, the clocks, the linen, the crockery, everything seemed patriarchal ; their shapes were new from their very antiquity. In the parlor, hung with damask and ornamented with brocatelle curtains, were various chairs and couches of antique forms, and a superb picture by Latour, of Popinot, Madame Ragon's father and municipal dignitary of Sancerre, quite an admirable old gentleman upon canvas, smiling like a parvenu in his glory. At home, Madame Ragon gave her own character the final touch by means of a very small English dog, of the breed known as that of Charles II, who produced a marvelous effect upon his little hard old-fashioned sofa. Besides their numerous virtues, the Ragons were to be esteemed for their stock of old wines now arrived at perfection, and the possession of a quantity of Madame Anfoux' cordials, which certain persons sufficiently persevering to love, without hope, it is said, the fair Madame Ragon, had brought her from the West Indies. Their cosy dinners, therefore, were highly esteemed. Jeannette, their old cook, served the two old people with blind devotion ; she would have stolen fruit to make them preserves. So far from depositing her money in

the savings' bank, she prudently ventured it in the lottery, hoping one day to bring home the big prize to her employers. On Sunday, when there was company, in spite of her sixty years, she superintended the dishes in the kitchen and the service at the table, with an activity which, according to the oft repeated expression of Ragon, would have considerably taken down M'lle Contat in the character of Suzanne in the "Marriage of Figaro."

The guests were Judge Popinot, uncle Pillerault, Anselme, the three Birotteaus, the three Matifats, and the abbé Loraux. Madame Matifat, who had danced in a turban at the ball, wore a blue velvet gown, thick cotton stockings and goat-skin shoes, chamois-skin gloves edged with green plush, and a hat lined with pink and decorated with orange-colored cryptogamian plants not unlike mushrooms. These ten persons were assembled at five o'clock. The Ragons always begged their guests to be punctual. When others, in their turn, invited this worthy couple, they took good care to dine at this hour, knowing that appetites of seventy years standing could not be expected to conform to the new hours fixed by the fashionable world.

Césarine was confident that Madame Ragon would seat her next to Anselme; all women, including both bigots and fools, are perfectly agreed in matters pertaining to love. The perfumer's daughter had therefore gotten herself up in a style destined to turn Popinot's head. Her mother, who had abandoned, though not without regret, all hope of securing young Crottat, who played, in her mind, the part of a hereditary prince, assisted her, but with bitter reflections, in her toilet. With maternal foresight she lowered the modest gauze neckerchief in order slightly to uncover Césarine's shoulders

and to expose the junction of the neck, which was remarkably elegant. Her Greek corsage, crossed from left to right, in five folds, opened from time to time, exhibiting admirable curves. Her slate-colored merino gown, with flounces trimmed with green ribbons, fitted tightly to a form of unusual delicacy and grace. In

her ears hung chiseled gold pendants. Her hair, drawn back à la chinoise, revealed the suave freshness of her vein-tinted skin, under which glowed the purest vitality. In fact, Césarine was so coquettishly beautiful, that Madame Matifat could not help secretly avowing it, though she did not perceive that the mother and daughter had resolved to bewitch the youthful Popinot.

Neither Birotteau nor his wife, nor Madame Matifat, in short, no one, interrupted the delicious conversation which the two young people, animated by love, held in the embrasure of a window, careless of the infiltering breeze. Besides, the conversation of the older personages became quite lively upon an expression dropped by Judge Popinot upon the flight of Roguin, to the effect that he was the second notary who had proved dishonest, and that such a crime had been totally unknown but a few years back. Madame Ragon, at this mention of Roguin's name, nudged her brother's foot, Pillerault drowned the judge's voice in an observation of his own, and both of them bade him remember Madame Birotteau.

"I know it all," said Constance to her friends, in a tone at once gentle and sorrowful.

"How much did he take?" asked Madame Mattifat of Birotteau, who had humbly dropped his head upon his bosom. "If gossip is true, you are ruined."

"He had two hundred thousand francs of mine in his hands. As for the forty thousand—an imaginary loan made by one of his clients whose money he had himself squandered—I have gone to law about it."

"It will be decided this week," said Popinot. "I thought you would have no objection to my explaining your situation to the presiding judge; he ordered Roguin's papers to be transferred to the council chamber, that he might find out at what period the lender's funds had been embezzled, and examine the proofs of the act as alleged by Derville, who, to diminish your costs, managed the case himself."

"Shall we win?" asked Madame Birotteau.

"I do not know," returned Popinot. "Though I belong to the chamber before which the affair is

brought, I should take no part in the deliberation, even if I were called upon."

"How can there be any doubt in so simple a suit?" said Pillerault. "Should not the contract set forth the actual delivery of the money? Must not the notaries declare they positively saw it pass from the lender to the borrower? Roguin would go to the galleys, if he were in the hands of the law."

"My opinion is," replied the judge, "that the lender ought to find his indemnity in the value of Roguin's office and of the bonds which he filed. But it often happens, even in clearer cases, that the counselors are six to six."

"What, Mademoiselle, has Monsieur Roguin run away?" said Popinot the younger, hearing the conversation at last. "Monsieur César has not mentioned it to me, and I would give all my blood for him—"

Césarine comprehended that the whole family was included under the expression "for him," for if the innocent child could have mistaken the tone in which Popinot spoke, she could not have been deceived in the blush which enveloped him, as it were, in a purple blaze.

"I knew you would, and I told him so, but he concealed everything from mother, and told no one but me."

"Ah, you mentioned me in his embarrassment," said Popinot; "you read my heart, but do you think you read everything?"

"Perhaps."

"Then I am very happy," said Anselme. "But if you would but relieve me of every doubt, I will be so rich in a year that your father won't give me such a cool reception again, when I speak of our marriage. I will sleep only five hours a night—"

"Oh, don't hurt yourself," exclaimed Césarine in an inimitable tone, giving Popinot a look in which her thoughts were plainly legible.

"Wife," said César, on rising from the table, "I think those two young ones are in love with each other."

"Well, I hope they are," said Constance, gravely, "my daughter would be the wife of an able and energetic man. Talent is the best dowry a husband can bring."

She hastily quitted the parlor and went to Madame Ragon's room. During the dinner, César had given utterance to several remarks which savored so strongly of his ignorance, that they had made Pillerault and the Judge smile; they reminded the unhappy woman how unfitted her husband was to struggle with misfortune. Constance's tears fell upon her very heart; she instinctively distrusted du Tillet, for every mother understands the *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*, though she may not understand Latin. She wept in the arms of her daughter and Madame Ragon, but would not tell the cause of her affliction. "It's nervous," she said.

The rest of the evening was spent in playing cards by the elder portion of the company, and by the younger in those games of forfeits styled "innocent," because they serve as a cover to the innocent fun of the loves of the bourgeoisie. The Matifats played forfeits.

"César," said Constance, as they were riding home, "go to the baron de Nucingen's as early as the 3rd, so as to be sure beforehand of meeting your notes due the 15th. If anything awkward should turn up, you could not get together the necessary funds, between one day and another."

"I will go, wife," returned César, pressing the hands

of Constance and his daughter, and adding, "I have given you very sad New Years' presents, my darlings!"

In the darkness of the carriage, the two women, who could not see the perfumer, felt his hot tears drop fast upon their hands.

"Hope for the best, husband," said Constance.

"All will go right, father; Monsieur Anselme Popinot told me he would shed his blood for you!"

"For me, and for mine, I suppose," replied César, in a gayer tone.

Césarine squeezed her father's hand as much as to say that she and Anselme were betrothed.

Two hundred cards were left at Birotteau's in the three first days of January. Such an avalanche of unmeaning friendship, such testimonials of favor, are a frightful mockery for men who find themselves involved in the current of misfortune. Birotteau called three times and in vain at the palace of the famous banker, the baron de Nucingen. The opening of the New Year and the festivities of the season were a sufficient reason for the financier's absence from home. The last time, the perfumer penetrated as far as the banker's office, where his first clerk, a German, told him that Monsieur de Nucingen had returned home at five in the morning from a ball at the Kellers', and of course could not be seen at half past nine. Birotteau contrived to interest the clerk in his affairs, and remained talking with him nearly half an hour. In the course of the day, this minister of the house of Nucingen wrote him that the baron would receive him the next day, the 12th, at noon. Though each successive hour brought its drop of bitterness, the day passed with terrible rapidity. The perfumer came in a carriage and stopped at a step or two from the palace, the court of which was filled with vehi-

cles. The poor honest man felt a twinge at his heart at the sight of the splendors of this celebrated firm.

"He has, nevertheless, failed twice," he said as he ascended the staircase richly dressed with flowers, and crossed the sumptuous rooms by which the baroness Delphine de Nucingen had made herself famous. The baroness was ambitious to excel the wealthiest houses of the Faubourg St. Germain, into which she was not yet admitted. The baron was breakfasting with his wife. In spite of the number of persons who were waiting for him in his counting-house, he said that du Tillet's friends might enter at any hour. Birotteau trembled with hope as he saw the change produced by the baron's reply upon the insolent face of the valet.

"*Egscuge be, by tear*," said the baron to his wife, getting up and slightly nodding to Birotteau, "*put dis shentlebad was ein goot royalist, ad the idibate friedd of ti Dilet. Pesides, he is tebuty bayor off te secodd wart, ad giffs palls of assiattic bagdificedce. You will bake his acquaitadce mit bleasure.*"

"I should be very much flattered to be allowed to take lessons of Madame Birotteau," said the baroness, "for Ferdinand—" ('dear me!' thought the perfumer, 'she calls him Ferdinand') "spoke to me of your ball with an enthusiasm which you ought to appreciate, as he is not given to admiration. Ferdinand is a sound critic, and everything must have been perfect. Are you going to give another soon?" she asked in the most amiable way.

"Oh, Madame, poor folks like us cannot amuse ourselves very often," replied the perfumer, ignorant whether this speech was intended as a mockery or as an ordinary compliment.

"*Bister Critdot superidtedded te dekoratiod of your roobs, I peliefe*," said the baron.

"Ah! Grindot, you mean," said Delphine, "a nice little architect just returned from Rome. I adore him, he draws such delicious sketches in my album."

Never was conspirator tortured by the interrogator at Venice more uneasy in the gripe of the inquisition, than was Birotteau in his clothes. Every word seemed to him a jest at his expense.

"*We giff leetel palls, too*," said the baron, giving the perfumer a searching look. "*All sorts of beoble giff palls.*"

"Mousieur Birotteau, will you breakfast with us without ceremony?" said Delphine, indicating the sumptuously served table.

"I come upon business, Madame, and really—"

"*Ya*," said the baron. "*Badabe, fill you perbit us to sprachen pishness?*"

Delphine gave a slight gesture of assent, saying to the baron, "Are you going to get some perfumery?" The baron shrugged his shoulders and turned towards the now despairing César.

"*Ti Dilet veels te bost profoudd idterest id you*," he said.

"We are at the point at last," thought the poor tradesman.

"*Mit his letter, you haff id mein haus ein gredit vish iz libided odly py te egstedt off by owd vortune.*

The exhilerating balsam contained in the water given by the angel to Hagar in the desert must have resembled the dew infused into the perfumer's veins by these half French words. The cunning baron had preserved the horrible pronunciation of the German Jews who flatter themselves they talk French, that he might have an

excuse for taking back promises which, though clearly given, he could say were altogether misunderstood.

"*And you shall haff ein agcount curradt. Tis is te vay ve'll to it,*" said the good, venerable and truly great financier.

Birotteau could doubt no longer; he was a business man, and he knew that a person who does not intend to render a service, never enters into the details of its accomplishment.

"*I do not need tell you dat in de great as in de leetel tings, de pank temand tree names. Ten you vill draw your nodes to de order ov our friend ti Dilet, and he vill de same tay send dem mit mein zignature to de pank, and in vone hour you vill haf de monish vor your nodes. You vill pay no cost, no quemission, noting at all, vor I sal haf de plessure in peing acreaple to you—But mit vone contission,*" said he, rubbing his nose with the forefinger of his left hand, with a movement of inimitable cunning.

"My dear sir, it is granted beforehand," said Birotteau, who supposed he referred to a share in the profits.

"*Vone contission to vich I ad de most great brice because I vish dat Matame ti Nichinguenne vould dake, as she did zay, lezzodz of Matame Pirôdôt.*"

"My dear sir, I beg of you not to laugh at me!"

"*Meinnesire Pirôdôt,*" said the financier with a serious air, "*it is agreed dat you infite uz to your next pall. Mine vife is tchelous; she want to see your habbardemens, ov vich dey have so tchenerally spoken.*"

"My dear sir!"

"*Oh! iv you refuse, dere is no agcount. You are in great fafour. Ya, I know dat you had de brefet of de Seine.*"

"My dear sir!"

"*You hade La Pillartière, one shentleman of de chamber,*

te goot Fenteheine, like you who were wounded—at Cheint-Rogue!"

"On the 13th Vendémiaire, sir!"

"*You had Meinnesire te Lasse-et-bette, Meinnesire Fauque-leine of de Agatemy—*"

"My dear sir!"

"*Ah! ter teifle! be not so motesae, mister tepudy. I heerd dat de king had said dat your pall—*"

"The king!" said Birotteau, who heard no more.

A young man entered familiarly the room where they were, and the lovely Delphine de Nucingen had deeply blushed when she recognized his step in the distance.

"*Goot morning, my tear te Marsay!*" said the Baron de Nucingen. "*Take you my blaze; dere is great compagny vor me in de offize. I know why! The mines of Wortschinne gif an ingome twize more pig as de gabital! Ya, I have received de agcounts! You haff one hundred tousand vrancks more for ingome, Matame ti Nichinnkeine. And you gan puy kashmires and shimcracks in order to pe peautivul, as if you had neet of it.*"

"Good heavens! have the Ragons sold their shares!" exclaimed Birotteau.

"Who are these gentlemen?" said the young elegant, smiling.

"*Sday,*" said Monsieur de Nucingen, returning, for he had already reached the door. "*Id zeems to me dat dese bersonnes—Te Marsay, dis is Meinnesire Pirôdôt, your bar-fumire, who giff te palls of assiatic magniffisensse, and whom te king has gifen de rippon.*"

De Marsay put up his eye-glass, and said, "Ah! true, I thought the face was not unknown to me. So you are going to perfume your affairs with some virtuous cosmetic to oil them—"

"*Vell, de Rakkons,*" resumed the baron, making a

grimace of discontent, "*hat an agcount mit me ; I have favored tem mid a vordune, and tey voult no vait vone tay more.*"

"My dear sir !" exclaimed César.

The poor man found his business extremely obscure, and without bowing to the baroness or to de Marsay, he ran after the banker. Monsieur de Nucingen was on the highest step of the stairs ; the perfumer reached the bottom as he was entering his office. As he opened the door, Monsieur de Nucingen saw the despairing gesture of this poor creature, who felt himself swallowed up in a gulf, and said to him, "*Vell! id ist understoot. See ti Dilet, and harranch all mit him.*"

Birotteau thought that de Marsay might have some influence over the baron ; he remounted the stairs with the swiftness of a swallow, glided into the dressing-room where the baroness and de Marsay were still likely to be. He had left Delphine waiting for her coffee. He saw indeed the coffee on the table, but the baroness and the elegant youth had disappeared. The valet smiled at the astonishment of the perfumer, who slowly descended the stairs. César hastened to du Tillet, who was, they told him, in the country, at Madame Roguin's. The perfumer took a hack, and paid the driver to go post-speed to Nogent-sur-Marne. At Nogent-sur-Marne the porter told him that *Monsieur and Madame* had returned to Paris. Birotteau came back crushed. When he told his wife and daughter of his excursion, he was amazed to find his Constance, ordinarily perched like a bird of ill-omen on the smallest obstacle in business, giving him the sweetest consolations and declaring that all would be well.

The next day found Birotteau at seven o'clock, before sunrise, watching in du Tillet's street. He begged the

porter to obtain him an interview with du Tillet's valet, slipping ten francs into his hand. César obtained the favor of speaking with du Tillet's valet, and asked him to let him see du Tillet as soon as he should be visible ; and he slipped two pieces of gold into the hand of the valet also. These little sacrifices and these great humiliations, common to courtiers and solicitors, gained him what he wished. At half past eight, just as his former clerk was putting on a dressing-gown, and collecting his confused ideas, whilst he yawned and stretched, and asked his old master to excuse him, Birotteau found himself face to face with the tiger hungering for vengeance, whom he still insisted upon regarding as his only friend.

"Don't mind me!" said Birotteau.

"What do you want, my good César?" said du Tillet.

It was not without frightful palpitations that César communicated to du Tillet the answer and the requisitions of the Baron de Nucingen. Du Tillet, though seemingly inattentive, heard it all, as he looked for the bellows, and grumbled at his valet for the awkward manner in which he had tried to light the fire.

The valet was listening. César did not perceive him, but after some time he did, and stopped short confused ; but resumed when du Tillet spurred him on with the words, "Go on, go on, I am listening."

The poor man's shirt was wet with perspiration. The drops of sweat froze as du Tillet fixed his look upon him, let him see his silver-colored eye-balls striped with streaks of gold, piercing him to the heart with a fiendish glare.

"My dear master, the bank has refused some notes of yours passed by the house of Claparon to Gigonnet,

without guaranty. Is it any fault of mine? How can you, an old consular judge, make such blunders? I am, above all, a banker. I will give you my money, but I never could think of exposing myself to the chance of having my signature refused by the bank. I only exist by credit. We are all alike there. Do you want money?"

"Can you give me all I want?"

"That depends upon the sum; how much do you require?"

"Thirty thousand francs!"

"Jupiter Ammon, what a shower of bricks!" exclaimed du Tillet, bursting into a loud laugh.

As he heard this laugh, the perfumer, misled by du Tillet's luxury, thought he recognized in it the laugh of a man to whom the sum was a trifle, and breathed freely.

Du Tillet rang.

"Tell my cashier to come up."

"He has not yet arrived, sir," answered the valet.

"Are the rascals jesting with me? It is half past eight; there should have been business to the amount of a million transacted by this hour."

Five minutes afterwards Monsieur Legras came up.

"How much have we on hand?"

"Twenty thousand francs only. You ordered the purchase of funds to the amount of thirty thousand francs, cash, payable the fifteenth."

"True; I must be asleep yet."

The cashier looked at Birotteau with a side glance and went out.

"Were truth to be banished from the earth, she would entrust her last word with a cashier," said du Tillet. "Have you no interest with little Popinot, who is just established?" said he, after a horrible pause, during

which the sweat stood in drops like pearls on the perfumer's brow.

"Yes," Birotteau innocently answered. "Do you think you could discount me his signature for any considerable sum?"

"Bring me his acceptances for fifty thousand francs and I will get them done for you at a reasonable rate by a certain Gobseck, who is very accommodating when he has large sums to invest, as he now has."

Birotteau went home heart-broken, without perceiving that the bankers were tossing him backwards and forwards like a shuttle-cock; but Constance had already foreseen that no credit was obtainable. If three bankers had already refused, all would be sure to have made inquiries about a man as prominent as the deputy, and consequently the Bank of France was no longer a possible resource.

"Try to get an extension," said Constance, "and go to Monsieur Claparon, your co-associate; indeed, go to all who hold your notes for the fifteenth, and propose to renew them. It will be time enough, in any case, to resort to discounters with Popinot's paper."

"To-morrow's the thirteenth!" said Birotteau, altogether cast down.

To use an expression employed in his prospectus, he enjoyed that sanguine temperament, whose consumption of vitality, through the emotions or the mind, is enormous, and which absolutely requires sleep to repair its losses. Césarine led him into the drawing-room, and played him ROUSSEAU'S DREAM, a very pretty piece by Hérold, while Constance worked by his side. The poor man sank on the floor with his head upon an ottoman, and every time he raised his eyes to his wife, he saw a sweet smile on her lips; in this way he fell asleep.

"Poor man!" said Constance, "what tortures await him! If he can only bear up."

"What is the matter, mamma?" said Césarine, seeing her mother in tears.

"My dear child, insolvency is close at hand. If your father is obliged to fail, we must not think of asking any one's pity. My darling, prepare yourself to become a simple shop-girl. If I see you bearing up courageously I shall have strength to begin life over again! I know your father, he will not withdraw a sou. I shall abandon my rights, all that we have will be sold. Do you, my child, take your jewels and wardrobe to-morrow to your uncle Pillerault's, for there can be no claim upon you."

Césarine was seized with terror without bounds as she listened to these words, which were uttered with religious simplicity. She thought of going in search of Anselme, but a feeling of delicacy withheld her.

The next day, at nine o'clock, Birotteau went to the Rue de Provence, a prey to anxieties quite different from those through which he had already passed. To ask a credit is a very simple thing in business. Every day, in undertaking an operation, men are compelled to raise the necessary capital; but to ask for an extension is, in commercial jurisprudence, what a police court is to the court of assizes, the first step towards insolvency, as a misdemeanor leads on to crime. The secret of your inability and of your embarrassment is in other hands than your own. A merchant places himself bound hand and foot at the mercy of another merchant, and charity is a virtue not practiced at the Exchange.

The perfumer, who lately walked the streets of Paris with such a look of confidence, now enfeebled by doubts, hesitated to enter the house of the banker Clap-

aron ; he was beginning to understand that, in the case of a banker, the heart is only a portion of the entrails. Claparon seemed so brutal in his coarse enjoyments, and his manners were so execrably bad, that he trembled at the idea of approaching him.

"He is nearer to the people, perhaps he will have more soul!" Such was the first word of accusation which his wretched position wrung from him.

César summoned the last drop of courage from the bottom of his soul, and went up the stairs of a miserable little entre-sol, the once green curtains of which, turned yellow by the sun, he had noticed at the windows. On the door he read the word *Office*, engraved in black on an oval plate of copper ; he rapped, no one answered, and he went in. The premises, more than unpretending, bespoke penury, avarice or neglect. No clerk showed himself behind the zinc net-work placed elbow-high upon an unpainted, white wood frame, which encircled the blackened tables and standing-desks. These deserted desks were covered with ink-stands in which the ink was mouldy, with pens as neglected as the hair of dirty boys in the street, and twisted into every sort of shape ; and were piled up with boxes, papers, and printed notices, without doubt useless. The passage-floor resembled that of a boarding-house parlor, so shabby, dirty and damp was it.

The second apartment, the door of which was adorned with the word *Cashier*, was in harmony with the sinister caricatures of the front office. In one corner was a large enclosure made of oak and trellised with copper-wire, with a movable door for the cat ; there was also a large iron trunk, doubtless abandoned to the gambols of rats. This enclosure, the door of which was open, contained a fantastic desk and a dirty chair ; the latter

was green and full of holes ; the seat was burst through and the horse hair excaped in rakish corkscrew curls, rivaling those of its owner's wig. This room, evidently the former parlor of the suite before it was changed into a banking office, presented, as its principal ornament, a round table covered with a green cloth, around which were a few old morocco leather chairs with nails that had once been gilt. The mantelpiece, which was tolerably elegant, showed none of the black scarifications of fire ; the marble was free from discoloration ; the fly-specked mirror, the clock set in mahogany, which had been bought at some old notary's auction, and which increased the gloomy effect already produced by two candlesticks without candles and by an adhesive dust, were mean and repulsive. The mouse-colored, pink-bordered paper indicated by its fuliginous shadows that it was the resort of smokers. It closely resembled the untidy parlor that newspapers call their "Editorial Office." Birotteau, not wishing to intrude, rapped smartly three times upon the door opposite to that by which he had entered.

"Come in," said Claparon, the tone of whose voice bespoke the distance the sound had traveled, and proved that the room in which the perfumer heard the crackling of a good fire, was empty.

This chamber, in fact, served for a private cabinet. Between the magnificent audience-room of Keller and the singular carelessness of this pretended upholder of commerce, there was the same difference as between Versailles and the wigwam of a Huron chief. The perfumer had seen the grandeurs of banking, he was now about to see its disreputable side. In his bed, in a sort of dark oblong closet opening out of this cabinet, in which the habits of a careless life had confusedly piled,

broken, soiled, torn and ruined an entire set of furniture, originally almost elegant, was Claparon; when he saw Birotteau, he wrapped himself in his greasy dressing-gown, laid aside his pipe, and drew together his bed-curtains with a remarkable quickness.

"Take a seat, sir," said this scare-crow of a banker.

Claparon without his wig, and with a handkerchief tied round his head, seemed all the more hideous because his yawning dressing-gown exposed to view a sort of long clothes of white knitted wool, browned by too long use.

"Will you breakfast with me?" said Claparon, calling to mind the perfumer's ball, and wishing to return a civility as well as distract his attention by this invitation.

A round table, hastily cleared of papers, bore witness to the attendance of festive company, showing, as it did, a pâté, oysters, white wine, the inevitable kidneys stewed in champagne, and now congealed in their gravy. In front of a charcoal-grate the fire was gilding an omelette. Two plates and two napkins, soiled at the supper of the previous night, were enough to enlighten the purest innocence. Claparon, thinking himself a sharp customer, insisted, notwithstanding the refusals of Birotteau.

"I was to have some one, but this some one has sent an excuse," exclaimed the ready-witted bagman.

"Sir," said Birotteau, "I only came on business, and I will not detain you long."

"I am overwhelmed with business," Claparon answered, as he pointed to a writing-desk and tables laden with papers; "they don't leave me one poor moment to myself. I receive visits on Saturday only; but, for you, dear sir, I am always at home! I no longer find time either to love or to lounge. I am losing my

taste for business, and to get it back again in all its energy, I must have a little leisurely laziness. I am no longer seen upon the boulevards busily occupied in nothing. Business is getting tiresome, I don't want to hear business spoken of again, I've got money enough, but shall never have happiness enough. Yes, I must travel, I will visit Italy ! Oh, beloved Italy ! still fair in the midst of thy decay, adorable spot where I shall doubtless meet some lanquishing and majestic Italian lady. Ah ! I have always loved Italian women. Did you ever have an Italian woman? No? Then come with me to Italy. We will see Venice, the home of the doge, now unhappily fallen into the undiscerning hands of Austria, where the arts are unknown ! Let us leave business, canals, loans, and governments alone ! I am a princely fellow when my pocket is full. Hurrah ! Let us away !"

"One word, sir, and I leave you," said Birotteau. "You have disposed of my notes to Monsieur Bidault."

"You mean Gigonnet, the good little Gigonnet ; a man as easy as—a slip-noose."

"Yes," answered César ; "I should like, and in this I reckon upon your honor and your delicacy—"

Claparon bowed.

"I should like to be able to renew."

"Impossible," the banker answered, curtly ; "I am not the only person concerned. We are united in a council, a true chamber, but where we harmonize like slices of bacon in a frying-pan. Ah ! the deuce ! we deliberate, we do. The lands of the Madeleine are nothing, we have operations elsewhere. Oh, my dear sir, if we were not engaged in the Champs Elysées, in the neighborhood of the Exchange, soon to be finished, in the Saint-Lazare quarter, and at Tivoli, we should not

be, as the fat Nucingen says, in *pishness*. And what is the Madeleine? a trumpery little affair. Bah! we don't play for nothing, old boy," he said, tapping Birotteau on the stomach and then putting his arms around him.

"Come, let us breakfast and talk;" Claparon resumed, in order to soften his refusal.

"Willingly," said Birotteau. "So much the worse for the expected guest," thought the perfumer, as he determined to make Claparon drunk, in order to learn who were his real associates in an affair that was beginning to look rather dark to him.

"Good. Victoire!" cried the banker.

At this call a thorough Léonarde made her appearance, bedizened like a fish-woman.

"Tell my clerks that I am not at home for any one. not even for Nucingen, the Kellers, Gigonnet, and the rest!"

"Monsieur Lempereur is the only one that's come."

"He will receive the fashionable callers," said Claparon. "The small fry must not pass the first room. Tell them that I am concocting—a glass of champagne!"

To intoxicate an old bagman is the one impossible thing. César had mistaken the tattle of bad taste for a symptom of drunkenness, when he undertook to make his associate confess.

"This infamous Roguin is still concerned with you," said Birotteau; "should you not write to him to help a friend whom he has compromised, a man at whose house he dined every Sunday, and whom he has known for twenty years?"

"Roguin?—a fool! his share belongs to us. Don't be down hearted, my good fellow, all will go well. Pay on the 15th, and the next time we'll see. When I say we'll see—another glass, if you please—the funds don't

concern me in the least. Were you to stop payment, I shouldn't look fiercely at you, for my share in the affair is simply a commission on the purchases and a percentage on the realizations, in return for which I manage the owners—don't you see? Your associates are solvent, so I am not afraid, my dear sir. There is such a division of labor now-a-days. A single operation requires the coöperation of so many strong heads! Embark with us in speculation. Don't go peddling about with pomatum and combs—faugh, ugh, disgusting! Fleece the public, sir, speculate!"

"Speculate!" said the perfumer, "what sort of business is that?"

"It is business in the abstract," resumed Claparon; "a business which will remain secret for ten years more, as Nucingen, the Napoleon of finance, says; by it a man takes general views of sums total, skims the cream off a dividend before any exists—a gigantic style of thing, a way of cutting and drying your expectations beforehand, in short, a second cabal! There are only ten or twelve strong heads of us yet initiated into the mysterious secrets of these magnificent schemes."

César opened his eyes and ears wide, as he tried to understand this composite phraseology.

"Listen," said Claparon, after a pause, "schemes like these demand men. There is the man of ideas, who, like all men of ideas, hasn't got a sou. These people keep up a deuce of a thinking, without paying attention to anything. Just like a hog lounging about in a wood where truffles grow. He is followed by a stout fellow, the man of money, who waits for the hog to grunt, as he always does when he finds a truffle. So when the man of ideas hits upon a promising scheme the man of money claps him on the shoulder and says, 'What have

you got there? Take care, my good fellow, you are putting yourself in the lion's mouth, your back isn't strong enough ; take three thousand francs, and let me work your idea up and bring it before the public.' Very good! Then the banker gets together the tradespeople and says to them, 'To work, boys! Prospectuses, circulars! Humbug to the death!' Then they all get trumpets and shout to the sound of the horn, 'One hundred thousand francs for five sous!' or five sous for a hundred thousand francs, gold mines, coal mines! In short, all the blowing and kite-flying of trade. We buy the opinions of men of science or of art, we put up our show-bills, the public rushes in, it gets something or nothing for its money, and the receipts are in our hands. The hog is shut up in his sty with a half-peck of potatoes, and the rest have a fine time with the bank bills. That's it, sir. Speculate, sir. Which will you be, hog or goose, clown or millionaire? Think the matter over. I have given you a sketch of modern loans. Come and see me, you will always find me a clever, jolly fellow. Gaiety in the French style, at once serious and careless, doesn't injure business, quite the contrary. Men who tinkle their glasses together are the most likely to understand each other! Another glass of champagne! Tip-top, isn't it? It was sent to me by a man that lives at Epernay, on the spot where it's made, for whom I have got a good many high priced customers. I was in the wine line once. He is grateful and remembers me in my prosperity. A rare thing, as times go."

Birotteau, surprised at the levity and carelessness of this man, to whom the world attributed an astonishing penetration and ability, dared not question him further. In the confusion of mind produced by the champagne,

he nevertheless remembered a name that du Tillet had pronounced, and asked who Monsieur Gobseck was and where he lived.

"Have you come to that, my dear sir?" said Claparon. "Gobseck is a banker in the same way that the executioner is a doctor. His first word is fifty per cent.; he belongs to the school of Harpagon; like him, he keeps Canary birds, stuffed boa constrictors, furs in summer, nankeens in winter! And what sort of paper have you to offer him? Why, to get him to take your bare unendorsed notes, you would have to pawn your wife, your daughter, your umbrella, everything, even to your hat box, your clogs,—I see you wear jointed clogs—your shovel and tongs and the fire wood in your cellar! Gobseck! Gobseck! Virtuous, but unfortunate man, who told you of this financial guillotine?"

"Monsieur du Tillet."

"Ah, the wretch, I know him. We were lately friends, but we have quarreled and don't bow; you may be sure that my repugnance to him is well-founded. He let me read to the very bottom of his slimy soul, and at your beautiful ball I was quite disgusted with him. I can't stand him with his self-sufficient way. Just because a notary's wife likes him! I can have a marchioness whenever I want to. No, I can never esteem him, never. I say, old gentleman, you are a sharp one to give a ball, and two months afterwards ask for a renewal! You will get on finely. Suppose we go into partnership. You have a reputatiou; this will be of use to me. Du Tillet was born to sympathize with Gobseck. Du Tillet will come to a bad end. If, as they say, he is Gobseck's stool-pigeon, he won't go far. Gobseck is in one corner of his cobweb, crouching like an old spider that has been round the world.

Sooner or later, whiff! the usurer will whistle him away as I do this glass of wine. I hope he will. Du Tillet once played me a trick for which he deserved the gallows."

After an hour and a half spent in perfectly senseless talk, Birotteau rose to take his leave. "Farewell, sir," he said.

"You will have to come and see me again," Claparon returned. "Cayron's first note has come back protested, and as I was an endorser, I paid it. I shall send round to your place; business before pleasure."

Birotteau felt struck to the heart by this cold and pretended obligingness as much as by Keller's harshness and by Nucingen's German mockery. The familiarity of this man, and his grotesque disclosures, colored by the influence of champagne, had wounded the honest perfumer to the soul; he believed he was leaving a financial hell. He descended the stairs, found himself in the street, without knowing whither he was going. He walked along the Boulevards, reached the Rue Saint Denis, remembered Molineux, and directed his steps towards the Cour Batave. He mounted the filthy staircase which so lately he had ascended in his pride and glory. He called to mind the meanness and asperity of Molineux, and shuddered at the idea of having to ask him a favor. As at the perfumer's first visit, the landlord was at his fireside, but, this time, was digesting his breakfast. Birotteau stated what he came for.

"Renew a note for twelve hundred francs!" said Molineux, with an expression of laughing incredulity. "Surely you are not in such a tight place as that, sir! If you haven't twelve hundred francs with which to meet the note on the fifteenth, you will send back my receipt for rent not paid! Ah, I should be sorry for

that! I don't stand upon the smallest ceremony with respect to money; my rents are my revenues. How should I pay what I owe without them! No tradesman will disapprove of this salutary principle. Money is no respecter of persons! Money has no sense of hearing! Money has no heart! The winter is severe. See how the price of wood has gone up. If you don't pay on the fifteenth, on the sixteenth a little summons at noon. Bah! that fellow, Mitral, your bailiff, is also mine; he shall send you his summons under cover, with all the respect due to your high position."

"Sir, I have never received a summons for any account of mine," said Birotteau.

"Everything has a commencement," said Molineux.

Aghast at the little old man's up and down hard-heartedness, the perfumer was crushed to earth, for he heard the knell of insolvency ringing in his ears. Each stroke awakened the remembrance of the speeches which his relentless theories had suggested to him in regard to bankrupts. His own decisions were now writing themselves in characters of fire on the soft substance of his brain.

"Apropos," said Molineux, "you forgot to put '*value received in rent*' on your notes; this may give me a preference over other creditors."

"The position I am in forbids my doing anything to the detriment of any of my creditors," said the perfumer, stupefied at the sight of the yawning gulf.

"Good, sir; very good; I thought I had learned everything relating to lodgers and lodgings. I learn from you never to receive payment in notes! Ah! I shall go to law, for your answer says plainly enough that you will not meet your obligations. This particular case concerns all the house-owners in Paris."

Birotteau went out disgusted with life. It is the nature of a tender, yielding nature like his to be disheartened at the first refusal, in the same way that a first success encourages it. César no longer hoped in anything but the devotedness of little Popinot, about whom he naturally thought as he passed the market-place.

"Poor fellow! who could have told me this when, six weeks since, at the Tuileries, I first started him in business!"

It was about four o'clock, the time when the magistrates were leaving the court-house. By chance, the examining judge had come to see his nephew. This magistrate, one of the most penetrating of men in ethical matters, possessed a second sight which enabled him to discover one's secret intentions, to detect the tendency of the most indifferent actions, the germs of a crime, the roots of a misdemeanor; he looked at Birotteau without the perfumer's knowing it. Birotteau, thwarted by the uncle's presence, seemed to the magistrate to be restrained, absent, thoughtful. Little Popinot, always busy, with pen behind his ear, was, as ever, humbly obsequious in the presence of his Césarine's father. The commonplace things which César said to his partner seemed to the Judge to be the precursors of an important demand. Instead of going, the shrewd magistrate remained, without any invitation from his nephew, for he had calculated that the perfumer would try to get rid of him by retiring himself. When Birotteau departed, the Judge went away, but he noticed Birotteau sauntering in that part of the Rue des Cinq Diamants which leads to the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher. This trifling circumstance made him suspect César's intentions; so he went out by the Rue des Lombards,

and when he had seen the perfumer re-enter, he quickly hastened back himself.

"My dear Popinot," César had said to his associate, "I have come to ask a favor of you."

"What can I do for you?" said Popinot, with generous zeal.

"Ah! you save my life," exclaimed the poor man, happy to find this warmth of heart scintillating in the midst of the polar region where he had been traveling for the last three weeks.

"It will be necessary to advance me fifty thousand francs on account of my portion of the profits; we will agree about the payment."

Popinot looked fixedly at César; César lowered his eyes. At this moment the Judge reappeared.

"My boy—ah! pardon, Monsieur Birotteau! My boy, I forgot to tell you—"

With a magisterial gesture, the Judge drew his nephew into the street, and compelled him, although in his shirt-sleeves and bare-headed, to listen to him as they walked towards the Rue des Lombards.

"My nephew, your former master may find himself in such a state of embarrassment as to be obliged to fail. Before reaching that point, men who can count their forty years of honesty, the most virtuous men, desiring to keep their honor intact, imitate the most rabid gamblers; they are capable of anything. They sell their wives, traffic with their daughters, compromise their best friends, pledge what does not belong to them. They frequent gaming-tables, become actors, liars. They even learn how to weep;—indeed, I have seen the most extraordinary things. You yourself have witnessed the genial ways of Roguin, to whom any one would have given absolution without first requiring confession! I

don't apply these severe conclusions to the case of Monsieur Birotteau. I believe him to be honest ; but should he ask you to do anything contrary to the laws of trade, such as signing accommodation notes and drawing you into a system of circulations, which, in my opinion, is a beginning of rascality, for it is really counterfeit paper, promise me you will not sign anything without consulting me. Consider that, if you love his daughter, you must not even for the advancement of your wishes, destroy your future prospects. If Monsieur Birotteau must fall, why should both of you fall? Is it not depriving you of all chance of making your commercial house his refuge?"

"Thanks, uncle. A word to the wise is sufficient," said Popinot, to whom his master's heart-rending exclamation was now explained.

The oil-dealer returned to his sombre shop with a thoughtful brow. Birotteau remarked the change.

"Do me the honor to go up-stairs into my room. We shall be better there than here. The clerks, although much occupied, might hear us."

Birotteau followed Popinot, a prey to the anxieties of the criminal awaiting the reversal of his sentence or the rejection of his appeal.

"My dear benefactor," said Anselme, "you cannot doubt my devotion. It is absolutely blind. Only let me ask if this sum makes you entirely safe, or if it is only to delay the catastrophe? If so, what good can there be in drawing me into it? You require notes at ninety days. Well, in three months it certainly will be impossible for me to meet them."

Birotteau, pale and solemn, rose up and looked Popinot in the face.

Popinot, in alarm, exclaimed, "I will do it if you wish!"

"Ingrate!" said the perfumer, who gathered up all his remaining strength to hurl this word at Anselme's forehead as a brand of infamy.

Birotteau walked towards the door and went out. Popinot, having recovered from the sensation which this terrible word had produced, rushed to the stairs, ran into the street, but could not find the perfumer. This formidable decree kept perpetually ringing in the ears of Césarine's lover; he had constantly before his eyes poor César's distorted features; he lived, in short, like Hamlet, with a terrible spectre at his side.

Birotteau wandered up and down the streets in the neighborhood like a drunken man. However, he at length found himself on the quay, followed it and went as far as Sèvres, where he spent the night in a small inn, beside himself with grief. His terrified wife did not dare to send after him anywhere. In a case like this, an alarm imprudently raised is fatal. Constance judiciously immolated her anxiety as a sacrifice to commercial honor. She watched through the whole night, mingling her prayers with her forebodings. Was César dead? Had he left the city, lured by some last hope? The next morning she behaved as if she were aware of the reasons why he was absent; but she begged her uncle to go to the dead house when, at five o'clock, Birotteau had not returned. During all this time the courageous creature was at her counter; her daughter was embroidering at her side. Both, with composed features, neither sorrowful nor smiling, waited upon the public. When Pillerault came back, he returned accompanied by César. As he was returning from the Exchange, he had met him in the Palais-Royal, hesitat-

ing whether to enter a gambling-room. This day was the 14th.

At dinner César could eat nothing ; his stomach, too violently contracted, rejected all food. The tradesman experienced, for the hundredth time, one of those frightful alternations of hope and despair, which, causing the mind to run up the whole scale of joyous sensations only to hurl it back to the darkest depths of grief, exhaust such feeble natures. Derville, Birotteau's attorney, came rushing into the splendid drawing-room, where Madame César with the utmost difficulty kept her poor husband, for he wished to go to bed in the fifth story. "That I may not see the monuments of my folly !" he said.

"The suit is gained," said Derville.

At these words César's contracted features expanded, but his joy alarmed Pillerault and Derville. The terrified women retired to weep in Césarine's bedroom.

"Then I can borrow !" cried the perfumer.

"That would not be prudent," said Derville ; "they have appealed ; the court may reverse the judgment. But in one month we shall have a decision."

"In a month !"

César fell into a state of prostration from which no one tried to rouse him. This species of inverted catalepsy, during which the body lived and suffered, whilst the functions of the understanding were suspended, this chance-bestowed respite was looked upon as a blessing from God by Constance, Césarine, Pillerault and Derville, and they judged wisely. Birotteau was thus able to support the distracting emotions of the night. He sat in an easy-chair on one side of the fireplace ; on the other sat his wife attentively watching him, with a sweet smile on her lips—one of those smiles which prove that

women approach nearer to the nature of angels than men, knowing, as they do, how to mingle infinite tenderness with the most complete compassion, a secret possessed only by those angels seen in dreams, scattered by Providence at long intervals over the path of life. Césarine sat on a small stool at her mother's feet, and from time to time gently stroked her father's hand with her hair, trying to give this caress an expression of tenderness which, in a crisis like this, is imperfectly conveyed by the voice.

Seated in his arm-chair as the Chancellor de l'Hospital is in his in the peristyle of the Chamber of Deputies, Pillerault, the philosopher, whom nothing astonished, displayed in his face that intelligence sculptured on the brows of the Egyptian sphynxes, and conversed with Derville in a low tone. Constance had advised consulting the attorney, whose discretion was beyond suspicion. Having her balance-sheet clearly in her head, she had confided the state of things to Derville. After nearly an hour's conference, held under the eyes of the senseless perfumer, the attorney shook his head as he looked at Pillerault.

"Madame," said he, with the horrible coolness of men of business, "you must suspend payment. Supposing that, by some contrivance or other, you manage to pay to-morrow, you must come down with at least three hundred thousand francs before you can raise a loan on any of your lands. Against debts to the amount of five hundred and fifty thousand francs you show very good, very productive, assets, but they cannot be realized. You must succumb within a given time. My opinion is, that it is better to jump out of the window than to be pitched down stairs."

"That is my opinion also, my child," said Pillerault,

Derville was led to the door by Madame César and Pillerault.

"Poor papa," said Césarine, gently rising to kiss César's forehead. "So Anselme has not been able to do anything?" she asked, when her uncle and mother came back.

"Ingrate!" cried César, struck by this name in the only conscious part of his memory—as the key of a piano causes its hammer to strike its own peculiar string.

From the moment in which this word had been hurled at him like an anathema, little Popinot had not had a minute's sleep, not an instant's rest. The wretched youth cursed his uncle, and had been to see him. To make this aged judicial experience capitulate, he had poured out the eloquence of love, hoping to gain over a man through whom mortal words ran like water through a sieve—a judge.

"Speaking in a business-like way," he said to him, "custom allows an active partner to make over to his silent partner a certain sum in anticipation of the profits, and our partnership is in a fair way to produce good returns. After a thorough examination of my affairs, I feel myself strong enough to pay forty thousand francs in three months! Monsieur César's uprightness permits us to believe that these forty thousand francs will be devoted to paying his notes. So the creditors, should there be a failure, will not be able to reproach us! Besides, uncle, I would rather lose forty thousand francs than run the risk of losing Césarine. At this very moment, she has doubtless been told of my refusal, and will soon think harshly of me. I promised to give my blood for my benefactor! I am in the position of the young sailor who is to sink holding his captain's hand, of the soldier who is to perish at his general's side."

"You are a good fellow and a bad business man, but you will not lose my esteem," said the judge, as he warmly grasped his nephew's hand. "I have thought much about this; I know that you are madly in love with Césarine; I believe you can satisfy the laws of the heart and also the laws of trade."

"Oh! uncle, if you have found out how to do so, you save my honor."

"Advance Birotteau fifty thousand francs, and let a contract be signed by which he may redeem his interest in your oil, which is now, as it were, a property. I will draw up the paper."

Anselme embraced his uncle, returned home, signed notes for fifty thousand francs, and ran from the Rue des Cinq Diamants to the Place Vendôme; so that just as Césarine, her mother, and their uncle Pillerault were gazing at the perfumer, surprised at the sepulchral tone with which he had pronounced the word, Ingrate! in answer to his daughter's question, the parlor door opened, and Popinot appeared.

"My dear and well beloved master," said he, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, "there is what you asked me for."

He held out the notes.

"Yes, I have carefully examined my position; have no fear, I shall pay. Save your honor!"

"I was quite sure of him," cried Césarine, joyfully, seizing Popinot's hand, and pressing it with convulsive force.

Madame César embraced Popinot; the perfumer rose like one of the just on hearing the last trumpet; he came, as it were, from the tomb! Suddenly he reached forth his hand with a frenzied gesture, to clutch the fifty stamped papers.

"One moment!" said the terrible uncle Pillerault, as he snatched the notes from Popinot; "one moment!"

The four personages who composed this group—César and his wife, Césarine and Popinot, astounded at their uncle's action and by the tone of his voice, saw him with terror tear the notes and throw them into the fire. The flames consumed them, without any one's trying to save them.

"Uncle!"

"Uncle!"

"Uncle!"

"Sir!"

There were four voices, four hearts in one, a terrible unanimity. Uncle Pillerault put his arm around Popinot, pressed him to his heart and kissed his forehead.

"You are worthy to be worshiped by all those who have a heart," he said to him. "If you loved a daughter of mine, had she a million and you no more than that—" he pointed to the black ashes of the notes—"if she loved you, you should be married in a fortnight. Your master is out of his senses! Nephew," Pillerault gravely resumed, "no more illusions! We must transact business with energy, not with sentiments. This is sublime but useless. I have passed two hours at the Exchange; you have not one copper's worth of credit; every one was talking of your disaster, of your applications to several bankers, of their refusals, of your follies, such as going up six pairs of stairs to see a landlord who is as garrulous as a magpie, and giving a ball to conceal your embarrassment. They go so far as to say you had nothing at all in Roguin's hands. According to your enemies, Roguin is a mere makeshift. One of my friends, whom I had commissioned to listen to everything that was said, confirms my suspicions. Everybody predicts

UNCLE PILLERAULT SNATCHED THE NOTES AND THREW THEM INTO THE FIRE.

the emission of Popinot's notes, and the idea is that you started him on purpose to make a paper-mill of. In short, you are the subject of all that calumnious and slanderous talk that a man draws upon himself when he strives to get up a round or two on the social ladder. Take a week and offer Popinot's fifty notes at every desk in Paris; 'twould be in vain; you would meet with humiliating refusals; no one would take them; there's nothing to show what number of them you issue, and everybody expects you to sacrifice the poor boy to save yourself. You would destroy the credit of the house of Popinot without benefiting your own. How much do you suppose the most daring note-shaver in town would give for your fifty thousand francs? Twenty thousand! Do you hear, twenty thousand! There are certain times in the life of a tradesman when he must stand up before the public three days without eating, just as if he had a belly full, and on the fourth he will be admitted to the larder of credit. You cannot get through these three days, and that's the fatal point. Courage, my poor nephew, you must make an assignment. As soon as your clerks are gone to bed, Popinot and I will set to work together, in order to spare you the affliction."

"Uncle!" said the perfumer, clasping his hands.

"César, would you prefer to wait and then make a disgraceful assignment, with nothing to assign? At present, your interest in Popinot's house preserves your honor.

César, enlightened by this last fatal flash of light, at length saw the frightful truth in its full extent; he fell back in his chair, then dropped upon his knees, his mind wandered, and he became childish; his wife thought he was dying and stooped down to raise him up; but she united with him, when she saw him join his

hands, raise his eyes and repeat, with all the compunction of resignation, in presence of his uncle, his daughter and Popinot, the Lord's sublime prayer :

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name: thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven : GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Amen."

Tears rose to the eyes of the stoical Pillerault, and Césarine, weeping and overwhelmed, leaned her head upon the shoulder of Popinot, who was as pale and stark as a statue.

"Let us go down-stairs," said the ironmonger to the young man, as he took his arm.

At half past eleven, they left César in charge of his wife and daughter. At this moment, Célestin, the head clerk, who had carried on the shop during this secret storm, came up-stairs and entered the parlor. On hearing his step, Césarine ran to open the door, that he might not see his master's prostration.

"Among the letters which should have been delivered to-night," he said, "there was one from Tours, but it was misdirected, and so arrived late. I supposed it was from master's brother, so I did not open it."

"Father," cried Césarine, "a letter from my uncle at Tours !"

"Ah, I am saved !" exclaimed César. "My brother ! my brother ! " he said, kissing the letter.

François' reply to César Birotteau.

"Tours, 17th.

"Your letter, my well beloved brother, caused me the liveliest sorrow. I went, after having read it, and offered up to God the holy sacrifice of the mass in your

behalf, imploring him, by the blood shed for us by his Son our Saviour, to look with pity upon your woes. As I pronounced my prayer *Pro meo fratre Cæsare*, my eyes filled with tears at the thought of my unfortunate separation from you at the time when you most need the support of a brother's love. But it then occurred to me that the worthy and venerable Monsieur Pillerault would doubtless take my place. My dear César, do not forget in the midst of your afflictions, that this life is one of trial, and is at best a transitory sojourn ; that we shall be one day rewarded for our sufferings for the sacred name of God and for his holy church ; for our reverent observation of the maxims of the Gospel and for our practice of virtue ; otherwise the affairs of this world would have no meaning. If I repeat these self-evident truths to you, knowing how good and pious you are, it is because it often happens that those who, like you, are tossed by the storms of the world and thrown upon the perilous sea of human interests, allow themselves to blaspheme in the midst of their adversities, carried away, as they are, by their sorrows. Curse neither the man who offends you, nor God who mingles gall in your cup according to his holy pleasure. Look not upon the earth, but rather lift your eyes to heaven, whence cometh consolation for the weak ; where treasure is laid up for the poor, where terror awaits the rich—"

"Omit all that, Birotteau," said his wife, "and see if he send us anything."

"We will read it often," said the tradesman, wiping his eyes and half opening the letter, from which fell a check upon the royal treasury. "I felt sure he would, poor brother," added Birotteau, picking up the check.

"I called upon Madame de Listomère," he resumed,

in a voice half choked by sobs, "and without giving my reasons, begged her to lend me such sums as she could dispose of in my favor, in order to swell the amount of my poor savings. Her generosity enables me to make up the sum of one thousand francs, which I send you herewith in an order upon the treasury signed by the receiver general of Tours."

"As if that would do us any good!" said Constance, looking at Césarine.

"By cutting off certain luxuries in my habits, I shall be able to refund Madame de Listomère the four hundred francs she has lent me, in the space of three years, so have no anxiety about it, my dear César. I send you all I possess in the world, in the hope that it may aid to bring your commercial embarrassments to a happy conclusion; no doubt they will be but temporary. I know your delicacy, and desire to meet all your objections. Do not ask either to give me interest upon this sum, or to return the sum itself in the day of prosperity, which, if God deigns to listen to my daily prayer, will soon arrive. From your last letter, received two years ago, I had supposed you rich, and had thought I might give my economies to the poor; but now everything I have is yours. When you have weathered this passing storm upon your voyage, keep the money for my niece Césarine so that, when she is married, she may purchase with it some trifle to remind her of an old uncle, whose hands shall always be raised to heaven with the prayer that God may shower down his blessings on her and all who are dear to her. Finally, my dear César, remember that I am a poor priest following the will of God like the sparrows of the field, walking quietly in the path laid

out for me, striving to obey the commandments of our divine Saviour, and that I have need of but little here below. So, have no scruples whatever in the embarrassing situation of your affairs, but think of me as of one who loves you tenderly. Our excellent abbé Chapeloud, whom I have not told of your circumstances, but who knows that I am writing to you, sends the kindest love to all the members of your family, and hopes for the continuation of your prosperity. Farewell, dear and well-beloved brother. I trust that God will keep you in good health, you, your wife and daughter, in this conjuncture of your fate; and I pray that you may have patience and courage in your tribulation.

FRANÇOIS BIROTTEAU.

Priest, vicar of the cathedral and parish church of Saint Gatien, at Tours."

"A thousand francs!" said Constance, angrily.

"Put them by," said César, gravely, "it's all he has. Besides, they belong to our daughter, and will support us without our asking anything of our creditors."

"They will believe that you have withdrawn heavy sums."

"I will show them the letter."

"They'll say it's a forgery."

"May the Lord have mercy on me!" cried Birotteau, in terror. "I have thought as ill of poor people who were doubtless in just my situation."

Rendered exceedingly anxious by César's state of mind, the mother and daughter worked at their sewing beside him in profound silence. At two o'clock in the morning, Popinot gently opened the parlor door, and beckoned to Madame César to go down. On seeing his niece, the uncle took off his spectacles.

"My child," he said, "there is some hope yet, all is not lost; but your husband could not support the uncertainties of the negotiations to be made, which Popinot and I will undertake ourselves. Do not leave the shop to-morrow, and take the address of the holders of all notes presented for payment, for we have up to four o'clock. My plan is this. Neither Monsieur Ragon nor I are to be feared. Now, suppose that your hundred thousand francs on deposit at Roguin's have been made over to the purchasers, you would not have them any more than you have them now. You have to deal with notes amounting to one hundred and forty thousand francs, to Claparon's order, which you would have to pay in any state of the case. So that it is not Roguin's bankruptcy which ruins you. To meet your liabilities, I see forty thousand francs to be borrowed sooner or later upon your factories, and sixty thousand francs in notes to be signed by Popinot. We can still struggle, therefore, for afterwards, you can raise funds on the Madeleine lands. If your principal creditor agrees to assist you, I will not consider my fortune an instant, I will sell my stocks and be without bread. Popinot will be between life and death; as for you, you will be at the mercy of the most trifling commerical accident. But the oil will doubtless bring in large profits. Popinot and I have taken counsel together, and we will stand by you in the battle. Ah, I would eat my dry bread with joy, if success only smiles at us from afar. But all depends upon Gigonnet and Claparon's associates. Popinot and I are going to Gigonnet's between seven and eight o'clock, and we will learn what their intentions in the premises are."

Constance threw herself in agony into her uncle's arms, speechless except by tears and sobs. Neither

Popinot nor Pillerault could possibly have known that Bidault, familiarly called Gigonnet, and Claparon were no other than du Tillet in a double form, and that du Tillet was anxious to see these terrible words in the *Petites Affiches:*

"The Decision of the Tribunal of Commerce, declaring César Birotteau, retail perfumer, residing at Paris, Rue St. Honoré, No. 397, bankrupt, provisionally appoints the 16th day of January, 1819, for the commencement of proceedings. Commissary-judge, Monsieur Gobenheim Keller: agent, Monsieur Molineux."

Anselme and Pillerault continued their investigation of César's affairs till day-light. At eight in the morning, the two heroic friends, the one an old soldier, the other but just passed second-lieutenant, who were destined never to know, but as the representatives of another, the anguish of those who ascend the stairway of Bidault, familiarly styled Gigonnet, proceeded, without speaking, to the Rue Grenétat. They felt really ill. Pillerault pressed his hands several times upon his forehead.

The Rue Grenétat is a street in which the houses, which are overrun by a multiplicity of trades, present a most repulsive aspect. The buildings are of an offensive character. The disgusting filth peculiar to manufactories is everywhere prevalent. Old Gigonnet occupied the third story of a house all the windows of which turned on a pivot and had dirty little panes. The staircase came down to the very street. The portress was stationed in the entre-sol, in a sort of cage lighted from the staircase only. All the tenants followed a trade, except Gigonnet. Workpeople were continually passing out and in. The steps were covered

with a layer of mud, which was hard or soft according to the weather, and to which the refuse of the house stuck fast. Each landing-place of this foul passage-way exhibited the names of the occupants printed in gold upon a red and varnished plate, with specimens of their best handiwork. The greater part of the time the doors were open and displayed the singular union of the family and factory, from which issued the most remarkable cries, whistlings, groans and songs, reminding one of the hour for feeding the animals at the Garden of Plants. On the first story, in a noisome kennel, were made the finest suspenders sold in Paris. On the second, in the midst of the most abominable dirt, were produced the most elegant paper boxes that decorate the windows of the boulevards and the Palais Royal on New Year's Day. Gigonnet, at a later period, died in the third story of this house, the possessor of eighteen hundred thousand francs, having resisted every inducement to move out of it, and in spite of the offer of his niece, Madame Gaillard, to give him rooms in her private hotel in the Place Royale.

"Courage!" said Pillerault, as he pulled the deer's foot forming the handle of the bell-rope, at Gigonnet's comparatively clean, but dingy door.

Gigonnet opened the door himself. The perfumer's two sponsors who had entered the lists on the field of bankruptcy crossed a coldly correct ante-chamber, without curtains at the windows. The three sat down in the second room, the usurer placing himself before a fireplace choked with ashes, in the midst of which the wood was sputtering in its struggle with the fire. Popinot felt his very soul frozen at the sight of his green paper boxes, and by the monastic stiffness of his office, which was no better aired than a cellar. He looked

gloomily at the bluish paper with tri-colored flowers which had adorned the walls for the last twenty-five years, and then transferred his gaze to the mantelpiece on which stood a clock in the form of a lyre, with oblong vases of blue Sèvres porcelain richly set in a gilt brass frame. These waifs, picked up by Gigonnet at the destruction of Versailles, came from the queen's boudoir ; but the precious vessels were flanked on either hand by two iron candlesticks of the most wretched model, which reminded one, by the frightful contrast, of the circumstance to which Gigonnet owed their possession.

"I know you don't come for yourselves," said Gigonnet, "but for the great Birotteau. Very good ! Vot can I do for you, my friends ?"

"We have nothing new to tell you, so we will be brief," returned Pillerault. "You hold in your hands a number of notes payable to the order of Claparon ?"

"Yes."

"Will you exchange the first fifty thousand for others signed by Monsieur Popinot here, we paying the discount, of course ?"

Gigonnet lifted off his old green cap, which seemed to have been born with him, displayed his bald, fresh butter colored skull, made an odd grimace, and said, "You vant to pay me in hair-oil, vot could I do vith it ?"

"If you are merry, we might as well pull up stakes," said Pillerault.

"You talk like a wise man as you are," replied Gigonnet with a flattering smile.

"Suppose I were to endorse Monsieur Popinot's notes ?" said Pillerault, making a final effort.

"You are gold in solid ingots, Monsieur Pillerault, but I don't want gold, I only want my money."

Pillerault and Popinot bowed and departed. At the

foot of the stairs, Popinot's legs were still trembling like pipe-stems beneath him.

"Is that a man?" he said to Pillerault.

"They say so," returned the veteran. "Never forget this short interview, Anselme. You have just seen finance stripped of its captivating mask. Unlooked-for events are the screw of the wine-press, we are the grapes, and bankers are the barrels which catch the drippings. The affair of the land is doubtless a good one, and Gigonnet, or some one behind him, is trying to choke César off, that he may dress himself in his skin. But it is all over now, and there is no help for it. Such are banks and bankers, never have recourse to them!"

After a frightful morning, in which, for the first time, Madame Birotteau took the addresses of those who came for their money, and sent back the messenger of the bank without paying him, the courageous woman, happy to have spared her husband these afflictions, saw, at eleven o'clock, Anselme and Pillerault, whom she had waited for with growing anxiety, return; she read the sentence upon their countenances. The handing in of the fatal balance sheet was inevitable.

"He will die of grief," said the unhappy woman.

"I trust he may," Pillerault gravely replied; "but he is so religious, that under present circumstances, his spiritual adviser, the abbé Loraux, alone can save him."

Pillerault, Popinot and Constance waited while a clerk went to summon the abbé Loraux before presenting the papers Célestin was preparing for César to sign. The clerks were sincerely grieved, for they loved their master. The good priest arrived at four o'clock. Constance acquainted him with the calamity which overwhelmed them, and the abbé mounted like a soldier to the breach.

"I know why you have come," cried Birotteau.

"My son," said the priest, "your sentiments of resignation to the divine will have long been known to me; but you must now apply them; fix your eyes upon the cross and remember the humiliations with which the Saviour's cup was filled to overflowing. Contemplate the anguish of his passion, and you will be better able to support the chastisement which God inflicts upon you."

"My brother, the abbé, had already prepared me," said César, showing him the letter which he had read a second time, and which he now handed to his confessor.

"You have a good brother," said Monsieur Loraux, "a virtuous and tender wife, an affectionate daughter, two true friends, your uncle and the excellent Anselme, and two indulgent creditors, the Ragons; they will all of them, in their goodness of heart, pour balm upon your wounds, and will aid you to bear your cross. Promise me to have the firmness of a martyr, and to look the calamity in the face without blenching."

The abbé coughed to summon Pillerault, who was in the parlor.

"My resignation has no limit," said César, calmly. "Dishonor has come, I must henceforth think only of reparation."

The poor perfumer's voice and manner surprised Constance and the priest. Nothing could be more natural, however. Any man will support a known, definite misfortune better than the cruel alternative of excessive joy and extreme affliction.

"I have been dreaming for twenty-two years, and I wake again to-day with my staff in my hand," said César, who was once more the peasant of Touraine.

On hearing these words, Pillerault pressed his nephew in his arms. César perceived his wife, Anselme and Célestin. The papers which the head clerk held in his

hand were significant indeed. César looked calmly at this group of which every countenance was sad but friendly.

"Wait a moment!" he said, detaching the cross of the Legion of Honor, and giving it to the abbé Loraux, "you will return it to me when I can wear it without shame. Célestin," he added, addressing the head clerk, "write me a form of resignation as deputy-mayor. The abbé will dictate it to you, you will date it the fourteenth, and have Raguet take it to M. de la Billardière."

Célestin and the abbé Loraux went down. For about a quarter of an hour, a profound silence reigned in Cesar's little room. His firmness surprised the family. Célestin and the abbé returned, and César signed his resignation. When his uncle Pillerault presented the balance sheet, the unhappy man could not repress a horrible shudder.

"May God take pity on me!" he said, as he signed the terrible document and handed it to Célestin.

"Sir," said Anselme Popinot, over whose clouded brow there passed a flash of sudden light, "Madame, do me the honor of granting me the hand of Mademoiselle Césarine!"

This request brought tears to the eyes of all who heard it, except César, who arose, took Anselme's hand and said in a hollow voice, "My son you shall never marry the daughter of a bankrupt."

Anselme looked Birotteau full in the face, and said, "Will you promise, sir, in the presence of your family, to consent to our marriage, if Mademoiselle accepts me for her husband, on the day when your failure shall be redeemed?"

There was a moment of silence, during which all were

affected by the sensations that were reflected upon the perfumer's dejected face.

Césarine held out her hand to Anselme, which he made an indescribable gesture to seize, and then to kiss.

"Do you consent, too?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied.

"At last I belong to the family, and have a right to take an interest in its affairs," he said, with a singular expression of countenance.

Anselme rushed precipitately out, the better to conceal a joy too much in contrast with the grief of his master. Anselme was not exactly glad of the failure, but then love is so absolute, so selfish! Césarine herself felt an emotion in her heart which was at war with her bitter sadness.

"Now that we've begun," said Pillerault in Constance's ear, "suppose we finish matters up."

Madame Birotteau made a movement of grief and not of assent.

"Nephew," said Pillerault to César, "what do you intend to do?"

"Continue my business."

"I don't agree with you," returned Pillerault. "Liquidate and divide your assets among your creditors, and show yourself no more in the Paris market. I have often imagined myself in a position similar to yours. (Ah, in trade, we must be prepared for everything! The merchant who never thinks of failure is like a general who never thinks of defeat; he is only a merchant by halves.) In your situation, I should never have gone on. What! Be condemned to blush before the men I had wronged, receive their glances of distrust and their tacit reproaches! I can conceive of the guillotine; all is over in an instant. But to have a head continually

growing and as continually cut off, is an agony I should have avoided. Many men resume business as if nothing whatever had happened! Very good, if it suits them, but they are stronger than Claude-Joseph Pillerault! If you do a cash business—and you must—they will say you have contrived to keep certain resources; and if you have no resources, you can never recover. So good-bye to that! Give up your assets, sell out your stock, and do something else."

"And what, pray?" asked César.

"Try and get a place," said Pillerault. "You know several persons of influence,—the Duke and Duchess de Lenoncourt, Madame de Mortsauf, Monsieur de Vandenesse; write to them, see them, they will get you a post in the king's household, with some three thousand francs a year; your wife can earn as much, perhaps your daughter, too. Your position is not a desperate one. You three together will make not far from ten thousand francs a year. In ten years you can pay one hundred thousand francs, for you will not spend a sou of your earnings, for your wife and daughter will have fifteen hundred francs from me for their expenses, and as to you, we'll see another time!"

Constance, but not César, reflected upon this judicious advice. Pillerault walked towards the Exchange, then held in a temporary wooden building forming a round hall, the entrance to which was on the Rue Feydeau.

The failure of the perfumer, a man so conspicuous and so much envied, was already known, and excited a general talk in the upper circles of trade, which, at that period, were constitutional in their politics. The liberal traders saw, in Birotteau's ball, an audacious invasion of their sentiments. The opposition desired

the monopoly of love of country. They were willing the royalists should love the king, but loving the country was the privilege of the Left, to which the people belonged. The government had been wrong to rejoice, through its organs, at an event of which the liberals were determined to have the exclusive use. The downfall of a protégé of the palace, of a partisan of the ministry, of an incorrigible royalist, who, on the 13 Vendémiaire, had insulted liberty by fighting against the glorious French Revolution, such a downfall excited the gossip and the applause of the Exchange. Pillerault desired to learn what the general opinion was. He saw in one of the most animated groups, du Tillet, Gobenheim-Keller, Nucingen, old Guillaume and his son-in-law, Joseph Lebas, Claparon, Gigonnet, Mongenod, Camusot, Gobseck, Adolphe Keller, Palma, Chiffreville, Matifat, Grindot and Lourdois.

"Well, well, what prudence a man must exercise," said Gobenheim to du Tillet, "my brothers-in-law were within an ace of giving Birotteau a credit!"

"I am in for ten thousand francs that he asked of me a fortnight ago, and I gave them to him on his bare signature," said du Tillet. "But he obliged me not long ago, and I do not regret losing them."

"He has done like everybody else, your nephew has," said Lourdois to Pillerault, "he's been giving balls! I can understand a rascal's trying to throw dust into people's eyes to stimulate their confidence, but the idea of a man who passed for the very cream of honesty, having recourse to such old humbug dodges by which we are invariably caught!"

"Like leeches," said Gobseck.

"Don't trust any but those who live in holes, like Claparon," said Gigonnet.

"*Ah ha!*" said the fat baron Nucingen to du Tillet, "*you dry for to blay be ein drick ven you send me Pirôddôt. I donno how it vas,*" he added, turning towards Gobenheim the manufacturer, *he no send to get dem fifty dousand francs; I should hab giff 'em, ya!*"

"Oh no, baron," said Joseph Lebas, "you must have known that the bank had refused his paper, you caused it to be thrown out by the discount board. The failure of this poor man, for whom I still profess the greatest esteem, presents some singular features."

Pillerault grasped the hand of Joseph Lebas.

"It is really impossible," said Mongenod, "to explain what has happened unless we suppose that there are capitalists behind Gigonnet, who want to kill off the affair of the Madeleine lots."

"What has happened to him will happen to all who leave their particular line of business," said Claparon, interrupting Mongenod. "If he had pushed his Cephalic Oil himself instead of rushing at these lands and thus running up the price, he would have lost his hundred thousand francs at Roguin's, but he would not have failed. He is going to continue under the name of Popinot."

"Look out for Popinot," said Gigonnet.

Roguin, according to this group of traders, was *the unfortunate Roguin*, the perfumer, *that poor Birotteau.* The one seemed excusable on account of his terrible passion, the other more guilty on account of his pretensions. On leaving the Exchange, Gigonnet went to the Rue Perrin Gasselin, before returning to the Rue Grenétat and stopped to see Madame Madou, the dealer in dried fruit.

"Well, Mother Plump," he said, in his tauntingly friendly way, "how's business?"

"Rather flat," said Madame Madou, respectfully, presenting her only chair to the usurer, with an affectionate servility which she had never shown except to *the dear deceased.*

Madame Madou, who would knock over a refractory or too frolicsome cartman, who would not have been afraid to go to the siege of the Tuileries on the 10th of October, who railed at her best customers, who would not have trembled while addressing the king in the name of the market-women, Angélique Madou received Gigonnet with profound respect. She had no strength in his presence, and cowered beneath his searching glance. The people will long tremble before the executioner, and Gigonnet was the executioner of this particular trade. At the markets no power is held in greater respect than that which fixes the rate of discount. Other human institutions are nothing compared with it. Justice herself is personified in the market-people's eyes by the commissary, an individual with whom they become familiar. But usury, seated behind its green paper boxes, usury implored with fear at one's very heart, usury withers the jest upon the lip, dries up the throat, quenches the fire of the eye and renders the people respectful.

"Is there anything you would like of me, sir?" she said.

"Oh, nothing, a mere trifle; hold yourself ready to pay Birotteau's notes, the poor wretch has failed, and every sou may legally be claimed. I'll send you the figuring up to-morning morning."

The eyes of Madame Madou became at first fixed like those of a cat, then vomited forth flames.

"Ah, the villain! Ah, the scoundrel! He came himself and said he was deputy and told big stories. By the living jingo, so that's what trade's come to, is it?

There's no more truth in mayors, and the government's cheating us. Wait a moment, I'll just go and pay myself—"

"Well, my dear, in such affairs as these everybody manages the best way he can," said Gigonnet, lifting his leg like a cat going over a puddle—a peculiarity of his, and one to which he owed his nickname "There are one or two big bugs that are trying to get their little matters out of the scrape."

"Good! I'll go and get my nuts out. Mary Jane! Bring me my wooden shoes and my rabbit-skin cashmere, and quick, too, or I'll hit you a clip on the cheek with my bunch of fives."

"There'll be a rumpus up street," said Gigonnet, rubbing his hands. "Du Tillet'll be glad of it; it'll make a nice scandal in the neighborhood. I can't imagine what this poor devil of a perfumer has done to him; as for me I pity him as I would a dog that has broken his paw. He isn't a man, he hasn't got the strength."

Madame Madou brought up, like an insurrection of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, towards seven in the evening, at the unhappy Birotteau's door, which she opened with extreme violence, for the walk had raised her spirits still higher.

"Here, you nest of vermin, I want my money, give me my money! You'd better give me my money, or I'll carry off scent-bags and fans and satin jiggamarees enough to pay my two thousand francs? When were mayors ever known before to rob their constituents? If you don't pay me, I'll send him to the galleys; I'm going to see the prosecuting attorney, and I'll let loose the whole rattletyrow of justice on you. I don't leave here without my money, there's the long and short of it!"

She made a movement to lift the glass top of a counter containing many valuable articles.

"La Madou prend,"* whispered Célestin to his neighbor.

The market woman heard the jest, for, in paroxysms of rage, the organs are paralyzed or brought to perfection, according to temperament, and she dealt Célestin's ear the most vigorous blow ever given in a perfumery shop.

"That'll teach you to be respectful to women, my angel," said she, "and not to make free with the names of people you rob."

"Madame," said Madame Birotteau, coming out of the back-shop, where she left her husband, whom Pillerault was trying to take home with him, and who, to obey the letter of the law, carried his humility so far as to ask to go to prison ; "madame, in heaven's name do not gather a crowd at the door."

"Oh, let 'em come in, I'll tell 'em the joke and we'll have a good laugh ! Yes, my property and my money, scraped up by the sweat of my brow, are used to give balls with ! Here you are dressed like a queen of France with the wool shorn off poor lambkins like me ! My saints alive ! Stolen clothes would burn my shoulders ! I haven't got nothing but rabbit-skin on my carcass, but its mine ! Brigands and thieves, give me my money or—"

She jumped at a handsome inlaid box containing costly toilet articles.

"Don't touch that, madame," said César, coming in,

* There is a play upon words here : *La Madou prend*, Mother Madou is taking things, and *L'amadou prend*, the tinder is catching fire.

"nothing here belongs to me; everything is the property of my creditors. I own nothing but my person, and if you wish to seize that and put me in prison, I give you my word of honor (a tear trickled from his eyes) that I will wait for the sheriff, the tipstaff and his officers!"

César's tone and gestures, which harmonized with his action, somewhat appeased Madame Madou's anger.

"My resources have been carried away by a notary, I am innocent of the disasters I have caused," resumed César; "but you shall be paid in the course of time, though I die in the effort, and work like a day-laborer at the markets, at the trade of a porter!"

"After all, you are an honorable man," said the market woman. "Excuse what I said, madame; but I shall have to drown myself, for Gigonnet will sue me, and I've got nothing but notes at ten months to redeem your cursed paper with."

"Call on me to-morrow morning," said Pillerault, making his appearance, "I will try to get them discounted by one of my friends, at five per cent."

"Hallo! it's that fine old Pillerault! Now I think of it, he's your uncle," she said to Constance. "Well, well, I believe you are honest, and I shan't lose anything, shall I? I'll be on hand to-morrow, old boy!" and she saluted the ex-ironmonger.

César insisted upon remaining in the midst of his ruin, saying that he could thus explain matters to all his creditors. In spite of the supplications of his niece, Pillerault appeared to approve César's design, and made him go up-stairs. The shrewd old gentleman then hurried to Monsieur Haudry's, told him what Birotteau's position was, obtained a prescription for a soporific potion, ordered it himself, and returned to pass the

evening at his nephew's. Assisted by Césarine, he forced César to drink as they did. The narcotic put the perfumer to sleep, and he woke up fourteen hours afterwards, in his uncle Pillerault's room, in the Rue des Bourdonnais. The old man, who slept upon a shake-down in the parlor, was his jailer. When Constance heard the carriage, in which Pillerault was removing César, roll away, her courage left her. Our strength is often kept up by the necessity of sustaining another more feeble than ourselves. The poor woman wept to find herself alone with her daughter, as she would have wept if César had been dead.

"Mother," said Césarine, seating herself in her lap, and fondling her with those caresses which women display the best among themselves, "you told me that if I bravely made up my mind to the worst, you would find strength against adversity. Then don't weep, dear mother. I am ready to go into some store, and I will think no more of what we were. I will be like you in your youth, a head shop-girl, and you shall never hear a word of complaint or regret. I have hopes. Did you not hear what Monsieur Popinot said?"

"Excellent young man! He shall not be my son-in-law—"

"Oh, mother!"

"But my son in good earnest."

"Misfortune," said Césarine, kissing her mother, "has one advantage; it teaches us to know our true friends."

Césarine at last calmed the grief of the afflicted woman, by enacting with her the part of a mother. The next morning, Constance went to the Duke de Lenoncourt's, one of the first gentlemen of the king's bed-chamber, and left a letter, in which she asked an audience at a

certain hour of the day. In the meantime, she called upon Monsieur de la Billardière, stated to him in what position the notary's flight had placed César, begged him to interest the duke in her behalf and to speak for her, as she was afraid she had expressed herself badly. She desired a place for Birotteau. He would be the most honest of accountants, if degrees in honesty were possible.

"The king has just appointed the Count de Fontaine to one of the general directorships in his household, so there is no time to lose."

At two o'clock, la Billardière and Madame César ascended the grand staircase of the hôtel de Lenoncourt, in the Rue St. Dominique, and were introduced to the king's favorite gentleman, if, indeed, Louis XVIII ever had any preferences. The gracious welcome of this grand seigneur, who belonged to the small number of true gentlemen whom the last century left the present, allowed Madame César to hope. The perfumer's wife was grand and simple in her affliction. Sorrow ennobles the mose ordinary persons, for it has its grandeur, and they have but to be unaffected to receive lustre from it. Constance was a truly unaffected woman. It would be necessary, said the duke, to speak immediately to the king.

In the midst of the conference, Monsieur de Vandenesse was announced, and the duke exclaimed, "Here is your preserver!"

Madame Birotteau was not altogether unknown to this young man, who had called once or twice at the shop to purchase those trifles which are often as necessary as much more considerable articles. The duke stated to him la Billardière's purpose. On learning the misfortune which had befallen the godson of the Mar-

chioness d'Uxelles, Vandenesse went immediately with la Billardière to the Count de Fontaine's, begging Madame Birotteau to wait for him. The Count de Fontaine was, like la Billardière, one of those brave country gentlemen, those almost unknown heroes, who had gone through the campaign of la Vendée. Birotteau was not a stranger to him, as he had seen him at the Queen of Roses. Those who had shed their blood for the royal cause enjoyed, at this period, privileges which the king kept secret, in order not to irritate the liberals.

Monsieur de Fontaine, one of the favorites of Louis XVIII, was believed to enjoy his entire confidence. The count not only positively promised a place, but he went to the Duke de Lenoncourt, then on duty, to beg him to obtain him a moment's hearing, during the evening, and to ask an audience for la Billardière of the king's brother, who was particularly fond of that ex-diplomatist of la Vendée.

That same evening, the Count de Fontaine went from the Tuileries to Madame Birotteau's, to inform her that her husband, after his settlement with his creditors, would be officially appointed to a clerkship, worth twenty-five hundred francs a year, in the office of the Sinking Fund, all the places in the king's household being filled by noble pensioners with whom engagements had been entered into.

This success was but a part of Madame Birotteau's task. She went to the Rue Saint Denis, to call upon Joseph Lebas, at the Cat and Battledore. On her way thither, she met Madame Roguin in a brilliant equipage, doubtless out upon a shopping excursion. Her eyes met those of the beautiful notaress. The blush which the rich lady could not repress, as she saw the impoverished woman, gave Constance courage.

"Never will I drive my carriage with ill-gotten means," she said to herself.

Kindly received by Joseph Lebas, she besought him to obtain her daughter a place in some respectable store. Lebas made no promises, but a week afterwards Césarine was established with her board and lodgings, and a salary of three thousand francs a year, in the richest fancy goods house in Paris, the proprietors of which were founding a new branch in the neighborhood of the Italian Opera. The perfumer's daughter received the money and superintended the shop, and, being placed over the head shop-girl, took the place of the master and mistress in their absence.

As to Madame César, she went the same day to Popinot's and begged him to allow her to keep his books and accounts and to do the household service. Popinot saw that his house was the only one in which the perfumer's wife would have the respect which was due to her, and a position free from humiliations. The worthy young man gave her three thousand francs a year, her board, his own room which he fitted up for her, taking for himself the garret of one of the clerks. Thus the fair tradeswoman, after having enjoyed the sumptuous splendors of her rooms for just one month, was compelled to dwell in the frightful chamber looking upon the gloomy and noisome court, in which Gaudissart, Anselme and Finot had inaugurated the Cephalic Oil.

When Molineux, appointed agent by the tribunal of commerce, came to take possession of César's assets, Constance, assisted by Célestin, went over the inventory with him. Then the mother and daughter, simply dressed, went out on foot, and repaired, without once looking back, to their uncle Pillerault's, after having lived in the house they were quitting, one third of their

life. They proceeded in silence towards the Rue des Bourdonnais, where they dined with César for the first time since their separation. It was a sad meal. Each of them had had time to reflect, to measure the extent of their obligations, and to sound the depths of their courage. All three were like sailors prepared to struggle with the storm, without forgetting the danger. Birotteau took heart on learning with what solicitude men of high rank had arranged his means of livelihood; but he wept when he knew what was to be his daughter's lot. Then he extended his hand to his wife, admiring the courage with which she recommenced her labor. For the last time in his life, Pillerault's eyes moistened at the sight of these three united beings, mingled in one embrace, the middle figure of which, Birotteau, the weakest and most dejected of the three, raised his hand and said, 'Hope on, hope ever!"

"For economy's sake," said the uncle to César, "you will live with me; keep my chamber and share my bread. I have felt alone here for a long time, you shall take the place of the child that I lost. It is but a step from here to your office in the Rue del' Oratoire."

"O God of mercy!" exclaimed Birotteau, "in the height of the storm a star is my guide."

When a man resigns himself to his fate, he brings his misfortunes to an end. Birotteau's fall was now consummated, he had given his consent, and he became strong again.*

* The translators have thought proper to omit here a passage explaining, in language exclusively technical, the formalities of the French bankrupt laws. It has no connection with the thread of the narrative, and would be altogether unintelligible to the American reader.

* * * * * * * *

Thus there are two species of failure; the failure of the merchant who resolves upon continuing business, and that of him who, having fallen into the water, contentedly goes to the bottom. Pillerault well understood this difference. In his opinion as well as in Ragon's, it was as difficult to come pure out of the first as to come rich out of the second. After having advised a total abandonment of his commercial life, he applied to the most honest attorney in Paris to liquidate the estate and hand over the assets to be disposed of by the creditors. The law requires the creditors, during the performance of this drama, to furnish the bankrupt and his family with food. Pillerault informed the commissary-judge that he himself would attend to the needs of his nephew and niece.

Every possible measure had been taken by du Tillet to render his failure an ever-present agony to his former employer. He accomplished his purpose thus. Time is so valuable at Paris that only one syndic, out of the two appointed, in a failure, usually gives his personal attention to the matter. The other is a mere matter of form; he appends his signature, like the second notary in papers requiring notarial attestation. And even the syndic who acts quite often trusts entirely to the attorney. By this means, the heaviest failures at Paris are carried through so promptly, that everything, within the period prescribed by law, is botched up, tied up, fixed up and served up! In a hundred days the commissary-judge may repeat the atrocious expression of an atrocious minister: Order reigns in Warsaw.

Du Tillet desired the commercial death of the perfumer. The very names of the syndics appointed

through du Tillet's influence were therefore significant to Pillerault. Monsieur Bidault, familiarly called Gigonnet, the heaviest creditor, was to do none of the work; Molineux, the worrying little old man who never lost anything, was to do all the work. Du Tillet had tossed this noble commercial corpse to this ignoble jackal, to torment as he devoured it. After the meeting at which the creditors appointed the syndics, Molineux went home, "honored," as he said, "by the suffrages of his fellow citizens," as happy in having Birotteau to domineer over, as a child is in teasing an insect. This landed proprietor, so punctilious in law matters, begged du Tillet to lend him the light of his experience, and he bought a copy of the Code of Commerce. Fortunately, Joseph Lebas, instigated by Pillerault, had, at the very outset, induced the president of the tribunal to appoint a sagacious and benevolent judge-commissary. Instead of Gobenheim-Keller, whom du Tillet had hoped to obtain, the president appointed Monsieur Camusot, an assistant-judge, a rich silk-mercer of liberal opinions, the owner of the house in which Pillerault lived, and a man of honorable reputation.

One of the most painful episodes of César's life was his forced conference with little Molineux, a being whom he regarded as absolutely null and void, and who, by a fiction of the law, had become Cèsar Birotteau. He went, accompanied by his uncle, to the Cour Batave, ascended the six pairs of stairs, and entered, once more, the miserable rooms of the old man who was now his guardian, almost his judge, and the representative of the bulk of his creditors.

"What's the matter?" said Pillerault to César, as the latter gave vent to his feelings.

"Ah! uncle, you have no idea what a man this Molineux is!"

"I have seen him from time to time at the café David, for the last fifteen years, where he plays dominos in the evening; that's why I came with you."

Monsieur Molineux was excessively polite to Pillerault and disdainfully condescending to the bankrupt. The little old man had planned out his course, studied the shades and niceties of his demeanor, and prepared his very ideas.

"What information do you desire?" said Pillerault. "We do not contest any of the claims against us."

"Oh," said Molineux, "the claims are all right, everything has been verified. The creditors are genuine and legal. But the law, sir! the law! The bankrupt's expenses were out of all proportion with his means. It is clear that the ball—"

"At which you were present," interrupted Pillerault.

"Cost hard upon sixty thousand francs, or that sum was spent on that occasion; while the bankrupt's assets then amounted only to a hundred and odd thousand francs. There is ground, therefore, for carrying the bankrupt before a special court upon a charge of simple bankruptcy."

"Is that your opinion?" said Pillerault, seeing Birotteau's dejection at these words.

"I make a distinction, sir; the man Birotteau was a municipal officer—"

"It is not likely you have asked us here to inform us that we are to be brought before a police court?" said Pillerault. "The whole café David would laugh at your conduct to-night."

The opinion of the café David seemed greatly to alarm the little old man, who looked at Pillerault

uneasily. The syndic had expected to see Birotteau alone, and had looked forward to taking up his position as sovereign arbiter, a perfect Jupiter. He hoped to frighten Birotteau by the terrible inquisitorial examination he had prepared, to brandish over his head the judicial axe, to enjoy his terrors and fears, and finally to allow himself to be melted to compassion, and make his victim forever after grateful. Instead of the insect he had expected, he found himself in contact with an old commercial sphynx—a model of prudence and wisdom.

"Sir," he said, "this is no time to laugh."

"Excuse me," said Pillerault. "You make very favorable terms with Monsieur Claparon ; you abandon the interests of the mass in order to get a decision that you shall have a privilege for your own share. Now, as a creditor, I can interfere. Remember the commissary-judge."

"Sir," said Molineux, "I am incorruptible."

"I know it," returned Pillerault ; "you have only taken care to save your own bacon, as the saying is. But in what can we enlighten you, relative to our affairs ?"

"I wish to know," said Molineux, with all the emphasis of his authority, "whether Monsieur Birotteau has received money from Monsieur Popinot."

"I have not," said Birotteau.

A discussion followed upon Birotteau's interest in the house of Popinot, the result of which was that it was Popinot's right to be paid in full for his advances, without being involved in the failure for Birotteau's half of the expenses of setting up the establishment. Molineux, skilfully manipulated by Pillerault, returned imperceptibly to gentler views, which showed how jealous he

was of the good opinion of the frequenters of the café David. He finally condescended to condole with Birotteau and to ask him and Pillerault to partake of his humble dinner. If the ex-perfumer had come alone, he would perhaps have irritated Molineux by the tone of his refusal, and the affair might have been the worst for it. On this occasion, as on several others, old Pillerault was a tutelary angel.

The commercial law imposes one formidable trial upon bankrupts; they are required to appear, in person, with their provisional syndics and their commissary-judge, at the meeting of creditors where their fate is decided on. This melancholy ceremony is, perhaps, little to be dreaded by a man who is indifferent to the result, or by a merchant who desires an opportunity to begin again. But for a man like César Birotteau, such a scene is a torture to which nothing can be compared except the last hours of the criminal condemned to death. Pillerault did everything in his power to enable his nephew to get through this horrible day.

The operations of Molineux, agreed to by Birotteau, were as follows: The suit relative to the lands situated in the Faubourg du Temple was won in the royal court. The syndics decided to sell this property, and César made no objection. Du Tillet, informed of a project of the government concerning the junction of Saint Denis with the upper part of the Seine by a canal, which would pass through the Faubourg du Temple, bought the land for the sum of seventy thousand francs. César's entire part and lot in the Madeleine lands was given up to Monsieur Claparon, on the condition that he, in his turn, should abandon all claims relative to Birotteau's unpaid half of the registry and notary fees, Claparon to

pay, also, the price of the lands, on receiving, from the product of the estate, the dividend accruing to the sellers. The perfumer's interest in the house of A. Popinot & Co. was sold to the said Popinot for the sum of forty-eight thousand francs. The stock and good-will of the Queen of Roses was bought by Célestin Crevel for fifty-seven thousand francs, with the right to the lease, the wares, furniture, the ownership of the Sultana Paste and Carminative Water, and a twelve years lease of the factory, the tools and utensils of which were likewise sold to him. The assets, therefore, amounted to one hundred and seventy-five thousand francs, to which the syndics added seventy thousand more, the proceeds of Birotteau's share in the liquidation of the unfortunate Roguin. Thus the total reached the sum of two hundred and forty-five thousand francs. The liabilities amounted to four hundred and forty thousand, so the estate would pay more than fifty per cent.

Failure is, as it were, a chemical operation, from which a skilful tradesman seeks to come out fat. Birotteau, distilled whole in this vessel, yielded a result which enraged du Tillet. He believed the failure would be a disgraceful one, whereas it turned out honorable. Careless of his profits, for he would obtain the Madeleine lands without drawing his purse strings, he ached to see this poor retail trader dishonored, ruined, defamed. The creditors, at their general meeting, would doubtless carry the perfumer in triumph.

As Birotteau's courage returned, his uncle, like a cautious physician, gradually initiated him, by increasing doses, into the operations of the syndics. Their violent measures were to him so many blows. A merchant is always grieved to learn the depreciation of things which, to him, represent so much money and so

much care. The news communicated by his uncle petrified him.

"The Queen of Roses gone for fifty-seven thousand francs! Why, the shop cost ten thousand francs; the rooms cost forty thousand; the accessories of the factory, the utensils, the moulds, the boilers, cost thirty thousand francs; even at fifty per cent. off, there are ten thousand francs worth of goods in the shop; and as for the Paste and the Water, they are worth a whole farm!"

These jeremiads of the ruined perfumer did not terrify Pillerault much. The old ironmonger listened to them as a horse receives a shower while waiting at a door, but he was alarmed at Birotteau's gloomy silence when the meeting of the creditors was mentioned. All who understand the weaknesses and vanities which beset mankind in every social sphere, will see what a horrible penalty it was for this poor man to enter, a bankrupt, the commercial palace where he had so often sat as judge; to be insulted on the very spot where he had been so often thanked for services he had rendered. Especially for Birotteau, whose inflexible opinions on the subject of bankrupts were known to every tradesman in Paris, and who had once said, "A man may be honest when he hands in his balance, but he leaves the meeting of his creditors a rascal!" His uncle chose favorable moments to familiarize him with the idea of appearing before his assembled creditors, as the law required. This necessity was killing Birotteau. His mute resignation painfully impressed Pillerault, who often heard him exclaim, through the partition at night, "Never! never! I should die first."

Pillerault, strong as he was in the very simplicity of his life, knew what it was to be weak. He resolved to spare Birotteau an anguish which might kill him, in the

terrible scene of his appearance before his creditors—an inevitable scene, for the law upon this point is formal, precise, peremptory. The trader who refuses to appear, may, for this act alone, be carried before a police court upon a charge of simple bankruptcy. But if the law compels the bankrupt to be present, it has not the power to compel the creditor to be so. A meeting of creditors is not an important ceremony except in certain determinate cases; for instance, when it becomes necessary to dispossess a scoundrel and to enter into a bond of union against him, when there is a difference of opinion between favored and non-favored creditors, and when the arrangement made is unduly unfair, and the bankrupt is in need of a doubtful majority. But in the case of a failure where everything has been converted into money, as well as in that of a failure where even the dishonest tradesman has made proper arrangements, the meeting is a mere formality. Pillerault went to every creditor, one after the other, and begged him to sign a power of attorney for his representative. Every creditor, except du Tillet, sincerely pitied César after having crushed him to the ground. They all knew what the perfumer's conduct had been, how regular his books were, how straightforward his business was. They were all glad that among them there was not a single exulting creditor.

Molineux, at first agent, afterwards syndic, had found everything that César possessed at his house, even the engraving of Hero and Leander, presented by Popinot, his jewelry, his breastpin, his gold buckles, his two watches—articles that an honest man might have removed without considering that he was violating any rule of probity. Constance had left her modest jewels. This touching obedience to the law made a deep impression on all classes engaged in trade. Birotteau's

enemies pointed out these circumstances as marks of imbecility; but sensible men looked at them in their true light, as a magnificent excess of integrity. Two months after the failure the opinion of the Exchange was greatly modified. The most indifferent confessed that the failure was one of the rarest commercial curiosities ever witnessed in the Paris market. The creditors, therefore, knowing that they were to receive nearly sixty per cent. did everything that Pillerault asked. There are but a very small number of attorneys, so that it happened that several creditors gave their power of attorney to the same man. Pillerault finally reduced this formidable meeting to three attorneys, himself, Ragon, the two syndics and the commissary-judge.

On the morning of the solemn day, Pillerault said to his nephew, "César, you can go without fear to your meeting to-day, there'll be no one there."

Monsieur Ragon desired to accompany his debtor. When the dry, fluty voice of the ex-master of the Queen of Roses was heard, his late successor turned pale; but the kind little old man opened his arms, and Birotteau rushed into them, like a child into his father's embrace, and the two perfumers bedewed each other with their tears. The bankrupt took courage on finding himself so indulgently treated, and got into the carriage with his uncle. At precisely half past ten, the three arrived at the cloister of Saint Merri, where the tribunal of commerce was then held. At this hour, there was no one in the bankrupt's hall. The day and the hour had been selected by agreement with the syndics and the commissary-judge. The attorneys were there to act in behalf of their clients. There was therefore nothing to intimidate César Birotteau. Still it was with profound emotion that the poor man entered Camusot's private

room, which, it happened, had been in other days his own, and he shuddered at the idea of going to the bankrupt's hall.

"It's a cold day," said Camusot to Birotteau, "and I dare say these gentlemen will be glad to stay here, instead of going and freezing in the hall. (He omitted the word bankrupt's.) Sit down, gentlemen."

They all sat down, and the judge gave his chair to the confused Birotteau. The attorneys and the syndics signed the papers.

"In consideration of your abandonment of your property," said Camusot to Birotteau, "your creditors unanimously remit the balance of their claims; the act embodying your agreement with them is drawn up in terms calculated to assuage your sorrow; your attorney will have it speedily recorded, so you are free. All the judges of the tribunal, my dear Monsieur Birotteau," said Camusot taking his hands in his, "sympathize with you in your position, without being surprised at your courage, and there is not a man who is not ready to do justice to your integrity. You show yourself worthy, in your misfortunes, of the position you once held here. I have been twenty years in trade, and this is the seeond time that I have seen a ruined merchant rise in public esteem."

Birotteau took the judge's hands and pressed them, with tears in his eyes. Camusot asked him what he intended to do, and he replied that his purpose was to work till he had paid his creditors in full.

"If ever you need a few thousand francs, to accomplish so noble a task, you may always have them of me," said Camusot; "I would give them with great pleasure, to witness an act so rare at Paris."

Pillerault, Ragon and Birotteau withdrew.

"Well, it was not a very bitter pill, after all," said Pillerault, as they stood upon the threshold.

"I recognize your handiwork, uncle," said the poor man, quite overcome.

"So now you are set up again, and as we are only two steps from the Rue des Cinq Diamants, come and see my nephew," said Ragon to César.

It could hardly be otherwise than painful to Birotteau, to see Constance seated in a little office in the low and gloomy entre-sol over the shop, in front of which ran a sign covering one third of the window and intercepting the light, thus inscribed: A. POPINOT.

"There's one of Alexander's lieutenants," said Birotteau with lugubrious gaiety, pointing at the sign.

This forced cheerfulness, in which the inextinguish-

able sentiment of Birotteau's imaginary superiority recurred so complacently, made Ragon almost shudder, spite of his seventy years. César saw his wife bringing down letters for Popinot to sign; he could neither restrain his tears nor prevent his face from turning pale.

"Good-morning, César," she said, smiling.

"I need not ask you if you are comfortable here," returned Birotteau, looking at Popinot.

"I feel that I am at my son's," she answered, in a tone so touching that it struck the ex-perfumer.

Birotteau took Popinot's hand, embraced him and said, "I have just lost forever the right to call him my son."

"Let us hope not," said Popinot. "*Your* oil does well, thanks to my efforts in the papers, and to those of Gaudissart, who has been to every town in France, inundated it with bills and circulars, and who is now having a German prospectus printed at Strasburg, and is going to come down on Germany like an invading army. We have disposed of three thousand gross."

"Three thousand gross!" exclaimed César.

"And I have bought a piece of land in the Faubourg Saint Marceau, cheap, and am building a factory. I shall keep that of the Faubourg du Temple, too."

"Wife," said Birotteau in Constance's ear, "with a little assistance, we should have weathered the storm."

Ever since the fatal day, César, his wife and daughter, tacitly understood each other. The poor clerk resolved to attain a result, which, if not impossible, was at least gigantic—the payment of his debts in full! These three beings, united by the bond of an uncompromising probity, became avaricious and denied themselves every comfort · the fourth part of a sou seemed to them

sacred. Césarine gave herself up to her duties with the devotion of her age. She sat up at night, she invented expedients for augmenting the prosperity of the house. She made designs for goods, and displayed an innate genius for trade. Her employers were obliged to repress her zeal for work, and rewarded her by presents and favors; but she refused the ornaments and jewels which they offered her. Money! was her single object. She carried her salary and her slender profits every month to her uncle Pillerault. César did the same, so did Madame Birotteau. All three acknowledging their want of capacity, and neither of them being willing to assume the responsibility of the management of the money, they entrusted Pillerault with the entire control and investment of their earnings. Having thus become a man of business again, their uncle turned them to profit at the Exchange. They learned afterwards that he had been assisted in this labor by Jules Desmarets and Joseph Lebas, both of whom took pleasure in pointing out to him such operations as offered no risk.

The ex-perfumer, who lived with his uncle, did not venture to question him upon the use to which he put the sums earned by himself, his daughter and his wife. In the street, he walked with his head down, concealing from every eye his dejected, abashed, almost stupid countenance. César reproached himself for wearing broadcloth.

"At any rate," he said with a seraphic air to his uncle, "I do not eat the bread of my creditors. Your bread seems sweet though due to the pity I inspire you, when I think that, thanks to this holy charity, I need not filch from my salary."

Tradesmen who met the clerk in the street saw no trace of the perfumer. The indifferent conceived a lofty

idea of what the fall of a human being may be, at the sight of this man whose face bore the impress of the deepest sorrow, and who showed himself overwhelmed by what had never struck the observer before, *his thought!* Not every one who seeks destruction can have it. Good easy souls, careless and conscienceless, can never offer the spectacle of a calamity. Faith alone stamps the fallen with its peculiar mark ; they believe in a future life, in Providence ; there is, in them, a certain light which points them out, an air of holy resignation mingled with hope, which is profoundly affecting ; they know how much they have lost, like a banished angel weeping at the gates of heaven.

Bankrupts are forbidden to enter the Exchange. César, driven from the domain of honesty, was an image of the angel sighing for pardon. For fourteen months Birotteau, giving himself up to the religious thoughts suggested by his fall, refused all pleasure. Though sure of the Ragons' friendship, it was impossible to induce him to dine with them, or with the Lebas, the Matifats, the Protez and Chiffrevilles, or even with Monsieur Vauquelin, all of whom were zealous to honor, in César, a man of superior virtue. César preferred being alone in his room to meeting a creditor's eye. The most cordial attentions of his friends reminded him bitterly of his position. Constance and Césarine never went out. On Sundays and holidays, the only days they had to themselves, the two women went to get César at the hour of mass, and, after having performed their religious duties, kept him company at Pillerault's. Pillerault invited the abbé Loraux, whose conversation sustained César in his life of trials, and they made a family party of it. The ex-ironmonger was himself too sensitive, on points where probity was

concerned, not to approve of César's scruples. He had therefore sought to increase the number of persons before whom the bankrupt could appear with a placid brow and unquailing eye.

In May, 1820, this family struggling with adversity was rewarded for its efforts by their first holiday, a surprise prepared for them by the arbiter of their destinies. The last Sunday of the month was the anniversary of the engagement of César and Constance. Pillerault and the Ragons together had hired a small country house at Sceaux, and the ironmonger was bent upon having a cheerful house-warming.

"César," said Pillerault to his nephew on Saturday evening, "we are going to the country to-morrow, and you shall go too."

César, whose handwriting was superb, copied documents in the evening for Derville and other lawyers. On Sunday, too, having obtained permission from the curé, he worked like a negro.

"No," he replied, "Monsieur Derville is waiting for an account for a guardian with his ward."

"Your wife and daughter deserve a reward. There will be no one there but our friends; the abbé Loraux, the Ragons, Popinot and his uncle. I insist upon it."

César and his wife, in the hurry of business, had never once been back to Sceaux, though they had both often wished to see the tree again under which the head clerk of the Queen of Roses had well-nigh fainted away. On the way, César being in a carriage with his wife, his daughter, and Popinot who treated, Constance cast sundry looks of intelligence at her husband, but could not bring a smile to his lips. She whispered in his ear, he nodded his head in reply. Her sweet expressions of an affection which, though unchangeable, was somewhat

forced, instead of lightening César's face, made it still more gloomy and brought unbidden tears to his eyes. The poor man had been over this road twenty years before, when rich, young, hopeful, in love with a girl as handsome as Césarine now was. His dreams were then of happiness, and now here he was again with his noble daughter pallid from overwork, and his long-suffering wife, whose beauty was like that of a city buried under the lava of a volcano. Love alone had remained. César's attitude checked the joy which was rising in the hearts of his daughter and Anselme, who recalled to his memory the charming scene of by-gone days.

"Be happy, my children, you have the right to be so," said the wretched father in a heartrending tone. "You can love each other without reproachful memories of the past," he added.

Birotteau had taken his wife's hands while saying these words, and kissed them with a holy and admiring affection which touched Constance more than the liveliest gaiety would have done. When they arrived at the house where Pillerault, the Ragons, the abbé Loraux and Judge Popinot were waiting for them, the demeanor, looks and words of those five excellent persons at once put César at his ease, for they were all affected at the sight of this man who could not forget his affliction.

"Go and take a walk in the woods at Aulnay," said Pillerault, placing César's hand in those of Constance, "go with Anselme and Césarine! Return here at four o'clock."

"Poor things, we should be in their way," said Madame Ragon, softened by the genuine sorrow of her debtor, "he will be all the more joyous, by and by."

"Repentance without sin," said the abbé.

"He could but be chastened and improved by misfortune," said the judge.

Forgetfulness is the great secret of strong and creative minds; forgetfulness after the manner of nature, which is forever beginning anew the mysteries of her unwearying productive energies. Weak minds, like that of Birotteau, live in their misfortunes, instead of treating them as apothegms of experience; they become impregnated with them and wear themselves out by their daily retrogradation in disasters long since ended. When the two couples had reached the path leading to the Aulnay wood, which was placed like a crown upon one of the prettiest hill-sides in the neighborhood of Paris, and when the Vallée-aux-Loups appeared in all its coquettish beauty, the charm of the weather, the loveliness of the landscape, the early verdure and the delicious memories of the happiest day of his youth, relaxed the melancholy chords in César's soul; he pressed his wife's arm upon his palpitating bosom, and a gleam of pleasure at last broke out in his hitherto glassy eye.

"You are yourself again, my poor César," said Constance, to her husband. "It seems to me that we are behaving well enough to allow ourselves a little treat from time to time."

"How can I?" the poor man replied. "Ah! Constance, your affection is the only possession I have left. I have lost even my confidence in myself, my strength has gone, and my only desire is to live long enough to die quits with the earth. You, my dear wife, you who are my wisdom and my prudence, you who saw what was to come, you who are without reproach, you have a right to be cheerful; I am the only guilty one of us three. Eighteen months ago, at that fatal ball, I beheld

THE LOVERS.

my Constance, my only love, more beautiful perhaps than was the girl with whom I gamboled in this very path twenty years ago, as our children are gamboling now. In less than two years, I have withered that beauty which was my proper and legitimate pride. I love you more as I know you better. Oh! my *dear* wife," he added, giving to the word an expression which reached Constance's heart, "I would rather hear you scold me than see you thus caressing my sorrow."

"I did not suppose," she said, "that after twenty years of married life, a woman's love for her husband could possibly increase."

This speech brought César a momentary forgetfulness of his grief, for he was so sensitive that a confession like this was a deep consolation. He proceeded almost joyously towards their tree, which, as it happened, had not been cut down. The husband and wife sat down and gazed at Anselme and Césarine who were unconsciously walking round and round upon the same lawn, probably thinking that they were going straight forward.

"Madamoiselle," said Anselme, "do you think me mean and miserly enough to turn my purchase of your father's share in the Cephalic Oil to my own account? I keep his half scrupulously apart, and I do the best with it I can. I discount with his profits, and if I get any dubious paper, I take it in my share. We cannot be each others' till your father is rehabilitated, and I am hastening that day forward with all the strength that love has given me."

The lover had taken good care not to tell this secret to his mother-in-law. Young men in love, even the simplest, always have a desire to appear great in their mistress' eyes.

"Will that be soon?" asked Césarine.

"Very soon," said Popinot. This answer was given in so penetrating a tone that the chaste and pure Césarine offered her forehead to Anselme, who kissed it greedily and respectfully, so much impressed was he by this noble, though child-like action.

"Father, everything is going on well," she said, with a knowing air to César. "So be pleasant and talk, and don't be sober any more."

When this united family returned to Pillerault's house, César, though a poor observer, perceived in the Ragons a change of manner which denoted an event of some magnitude. The welcome extended to him by Madame Ragon was particularly unctuous, and her look and her accent plainly told César, "We are paid."

At dessert, the notary of Sceaux presented himself; uncle Pillerault bade him be seated and looked at Birotteau who began to suspect a surprise, though he was far from imagining its full extent.

"Nephew, the earnings and savings of your wife and daughter and your own, during the past eighteen months, have reached the sum of twenty thousand francs. I received thirty thousand francs as the dividend of my claim, so that we have fifty thousand for your creditors. Out of this, Monsieur Ragon has received thirty thousand francs, and the notary of Sceaux has brought you a receipt in full, interest included. The remainder is in Crottat's hands, for Lourdois, Madame Madou, the mason, the carpenter, and the other more needy creditors. We'll see what next year will do for us. With time and patience, a man can go a great way."

Birotteau's joy cannot be written; he threw himself into his uncle's arms and wept.

"Let him wear his cross to-day," said Ragon to the abbé Loraux.

The confessor attached the red ribbon to the button-hole of the clerk, who looked at himself in the glass twenty times that evening, manifesting a delight at which people who think themselves superior would have laughed, but which these worthy citizens thought perfectly natural. The next day Birotteau called upon Madame Madou.

"Ah! there you are, my honest man," she said, "I hardly knew you, you've turned so grey. Still, you don't suffer, you've all of you got places. I have to labor like a turnspit who works a crank and who deserves Christian baptism."

"My dear Madame—"

"Oh, I don't reproach you, I abandoned my claim."

"I have come to tell you that the remainder of your claim, with interest, will be paid at the notary Crottat's to-day."

"What, really?"

"Be there at half past eleven."

"There's honor for you, good measure and running over," said she, looking at Birotteau with undisguised admiration. "But stop a moment, my dear sir; I'm doing a good round business with your little red-headed friend, he's a fine young man and lets me make a big profit without ever higgling about the price, so as to make it up to me that way. Come now, I'll give you a receipt in full, and you shall keep your money, you respectable old man! Oh, I know it, Mother Madou *does* get her temper up, she *does* have her tantrums, but she's got something here!" and she thumped herself violently on the most voluminous cushions of flesh that ever were seen in the markets.

"Never," said Birotteau; "the law is stringent, I insist upon paying you in full."

"Oh, very well, then I won't keep you waiting," said she. "And to-morrow at market, I'll let 'em all know what honor is. It's a jolly good joke any way!"

The worthy debtor went through the same scene at the painter's, Crottat's father-in-law, with variations. It was raining, and César left his unbrella in a corner, near the door. The wealthy painter, seeing the water streaming through his fine dining-room where he was breakfasting with his wife, was not very courteous in his manners.

"Well, what brings you here, my poor Birotteau?" he said with that hard tone often assumed towards unfortunate beggars.

"Your son-in-law has not told you, then—"

"Told me what?" interrupted Lourdois, supposing that Birotteau had a favor to ask.

"To call at his office this morning, at half past eleven, to give me a receipt for the payment in full of your claim?"

"Oh, that's a very different thing; pray sit down, Monsieur Birotteau, and take a bite with us."

"Do us the honor of sharing our meal," added Madame Lourdois.

"So things are going well?" asked the corpulent Lourdois.

"No, sir, I have had to breakfast every morning off a biscuit at my desk to get together a little money, but I hope in time to be able to repair the damage I have done my neighbor."

"Upon my word," said the painter, cramming down a slice of bread thickly spread with pâté de foie gras, "you are an honorable man."

"And what is Madame Birotteau doing?"

"She keeps the books and accounts at Monsieur Anselme Popinot's."

"Poor people," said Madame Lourdois in a whisper to her husband.

"If you should ever have need of me, my dear Birotteau, come and see me. I may be able to assist you."

"I shall have need of you at half past eleven, sir," said Birotteau, and he departed.

This first result gave the bankrupt courage, without restoring his tranquillity; the desire of redeeming his honor unduly agitated his life; he lost the color which animated his face, his eyes became lustreless and his cheeks hollow. Sometimes an old friend would meet César at eight in the morning or four in the afternoon, going to or returning from the Rue de l'Oratoire, dressed in the coat which he wore at the time of his fall, and of which he took as much care as a poor sub-lieutenant does of his uniform, and, noticing his hair, now completely white, his pale face and shrinking manner, would stop him in spite of his efforts to avoid a meeting—for his eye was on the watch, and he glided along the walls like a retreating thief.

"Your conduct is well known, friend," he would say.

"Everybody regrets the severity with which you treat yourself, as well as your wife and daughter."

"Take a little more time," another would say; "a wound in one's purse is never fatal."

"Perhaps not, but a wound in one's soul is," said César, quite disheartened, one day to Matifat.

In the early part of the year 1822, the construction of the Canal Saint Martin was decided upon. The lands situated in the Faubourg du Temple reached almost fabulous prices. The proposed route cut du Tillet's

property, formerly Birotteau's, exactly in halves. The company which obtained the privilege of building and working the canal agreed to the exhorbitant price asked by the banker, if he would hand the land over to them within a given time. The lease granted by César to Popinot prevented his doing so. The banker visited the Rue des Cinq Diamants and called upon the druggist. Though Popinot had no personal feeling against du Tillet, Césarine's betrothed hated him instinctively.

He was ignorant of the theft committed and the infamous plots hatched by the lucky financier, but a voice within him cried out, 'This man is an unpunished thief.' Popinot would not have entered into the slightest business arrangement with him ; his very presence was odious. At this period, too, he saw du Tillet growing rich upon the spoils of his former employer, for the Madeleine lands were already reaching prices which foreshadowed the exhorbitant sums at which they were held in 1827. So, when the banker explained the object of his visit, Popinot looked at him with concentrated indignation.

"I cannot refuse to give up my lease, but I want sixty thousand francs for it, and I won't take the fourth part of a sou less."

"Sixty thousand francs !" cried du Tillet, making a movement to retire.

"My lease has fifteen years to run, and it will cost me three thousand francs a year extra to get another factory. Sixty thousand francs, or we'll say no more about it," said Popinot, returning to the store, whither du Tillet followed him.

The discussion waxed warm, the name of Birotteau was pronounced, Madame César came down and saw du Tillet for the first time since the famous ball. The

banker could not repress a movement of surprise, at sight of the changes wrought in his former mistress, and he cast down his eyes, frightened at his own work.

"This gentleman," said Popinot to Madame César, "is to get three hundred thousand francs for *your* land and refuses *us* sixty thousand francs bonus for *our* lease."

"But think," said du Tillet, with emphasis, "that makes three thousand francs a year."

"Three thousand francs!" repeated Madame César, simply but pointedly. Du Tillet turned pale, and Popinot looked at Madame Birotteau. A moment of profound silence followed, which made this scene still more inexplicable to Anselme.

"Sign this surrender of the lease which I have had drawn up by Crottat," said du Tillet, drawing a legal document from his side pocket, "and I will give you a check upon the bank for sixty thousand francs."

Popinot looked at Madame César without disguising his profound amazement; he thought he must be dreaming. While du Tillet was filling up this check upon an elevated desk, Constance disappeared and returned up-stairs. The druggist and banker exchanged papers. Du Tillet bowed coldly to Popinot and went out.

"In a few months, thanks to this strange affair," said Popinot, looking at du Tillet proceed on foot to the Rue des Lombards where his cabriolet was waiting, "I shall have my Césarine. My poor little wife shall no longer work her blood into a fever. To think that one look from Madame César did the business! What can there be between this bandit and her? What has occurred is really extraordinary."

Popinot sent to the bank to draw the check, and

went up-stairs to speak to Madame Birotteau; he did not find her in the office, and presumed she was in her chamber. Anselme and Constance lived as a son-in-law and mother-in-law may live together when they are mutually satisfied with each other; he went, therefore, to her room with the eagerness natural to a lover who

sees his happiness almost within his grasp. The young tradesman was prodigiously surprised to find his future mother-in-law, to whose side he bounded like a cat, reading a letter from du Tillet, for Anselme recognized the handwriting of Birotteau's former clerk. A lighted candle, the black and dancing phantoms of letters

burned upon the hearth, made Popinot shudder, for he had unwillingly, with his piercing eyes, caught this sentence at the top of the letter in his mother-in-law's hand:

"*I adore you, angel of my life! You know it, too; then why—*"

"What power is this you have over du Tillet, to make him conclude such an operation?" he asked, laughing convulsively from the effect of the repression of his harsh suspicions.

"Oh, don't let us speak of that!" she said, showing plainly how deeply she was moved.

"Well," returned Popinot, quite thrown off his balance, "let us speak of the end of your sorrows." And he turned rapidly upon his heel, and going to the window, drummed on the glass, and looked out into the court "After all," he said to himself, "suppose she has loved du Tillet, is that a reason for my not behaving like an honest man?"

"What is the matter, Anselme?" said the poor woman.

"The net profits of the Cephalic Oil," said Popinot, roughly, "amount to two hundred and forty-two thousand francs, the half of which is one hundred and twenty-one thousand. From this sum I take the forty-eight thousand paid Monsieur Birotteau, and seventy-three thousand remain; to which I add sixty thousand for the surrender of the lease, and *you* have one hundred and thirty-three thousand francs."

Madame César listened in such an anxiety of happiness, that Popinot heard the violent pulsations of her heart.

"I have always considered Monsieur Birotteau as my partner," he resumed, "so we have this sum at our dis-

posal to reimburse his creditors. If we add to it the twenty-eight thousand francs resulting from your savings and invested by our uncle Pillerault, we have one hundred and sixty-one thousand francs. Our uncle will not refuse us a quit claim of his twenty-five thousand francs. And no power on earth can prevent me from advancing my father-in-law such sums upon next year's profits as may be necessary to make up the whole amount due. Thus—he—will be—REHABILITATED."

"Rehabilitated!" cried Madame César, as she knelt upon her chair. She clasped her hands and prayed, letting the letter drop from her hands. "Dear Anselme!" she said, making the sign of a cross, "my dear boy!" She took his head in her hands, kissed him on the forehead, pressed him to her bosom, and abandoned herself freely to her joy. "Césarine is yours, in good earnest! She will be very happy! She shall leave the shop where she is working herself to death."

"For love," said Popinot.

"Yes," said his mother, smiling.

"Listen to a little secret," said Popinot, looking at the fatal letter out of one corner of his eye. "I did Célestin a service in aiding him to buy out your stock, but I saddled it with a condition. Your rooms are precisely as you left them. I had an idea, but I did not believe luck would have favored us as it has. Célestin has bound himself to underlet your former rooms to you; he has not set foot in them, and all the furniture is yours. I keep the second story for myself, and shall live there with Césarine, who will never leave you. After our marriage, I shall come and pass the mornings here—that is, from eight in the morning to six in the evening. In order to restore you your fortune, I will buy out Monsieur César's interest for one hundred thous-

and francs, so that you will have, with his clerkship, ten thousand francs a year. Will you not be happy ?"

"Say no more, Anselme, or I shall lose my senses."

Madame César's angelic attitude, the pure light of her eyes and the innocence of her fair brow, gave the lie so proudly to the thousand ideas that were revolving in the lover's brain, that he was determined to put an end to the abomination of his doubts. An error was totally irreconcileable with the life and the principles of Pillerault's niece.

"My dear, my adored mother, my soul has just conceived a horrible suspicion. If you wish to see me happy, you will crush it this very instant." Popinot had stretched forth his hand, and had seized the letter.

"Without meaning it," he said, alarmed at the terror depicted upon Constance's face, "I read the first few words of this letter written by du Tillet. These words coincide so strangely with the effect you produced just now in inducing so ready a compliance on the part of that man with my exorbitant demand, that any one would account for it as the fiend at my ear accounts for it, in spite of me. One look and three words from you sufficed—"

"Do not finish," said Madame César, taking back the letter and burning it before Anselme's eyes. "My child, I have been very cruelly punished for a trifling fault. I will tell you all, Anselme. I do not wish the suspicion inspired by the mother to injure the daughter, and besides, I can speak without having cause to blush ; I would tell my husband what I am going to tell you. Du Tillet sought to ruin me, my husband was at once informed of it, and du Tillet was to be discharged. The day when my husband was going to dismiss him, he stole three thousand francs."

"I suspected it," said Popinot, in an accent that clearly expressed his hatred.

"Anselme, your future life, your happiness, require this avowal; but let it die in your heart, as it is already dead in mine and César's. You must remember my husband's scolding about an error in the accounts. Birotteau, to avoid a law-suit and to spare the man, doubtless, put three thousand francs into the till to make good the amount—the cost of the cashmere shawl which I had to wait three years for. So there is my exclamation accounted for. Alas! my dear boy, I will confess my childish folly; du Tillet had written me three love letters, which painted his character so well," she said, sighing and casting down her eyes, "that I kept them—as a curiosity. I have never re-read them once. Still it was imprudent to keep them. On seeing du Tillet just now, I thought of them, I came up-stairs to burn them, and was looking at the last when you came in—that's all, Anselme."

Anselme knelt upon one knee and kissed Madame César's hand with an expression so touching that it called tears to the eyes of both of them. The mother-in-law raised her son-in-law up, stretched forth her arms to him, and pressed him to her heart.

This was destined to be a joyful day for César. The king's private secretary, Monsieur de Vandenesse, came to the office to speak to him. They went out together into the little court-yard of the Sinking Fund.

"Monsieur Birotteau," said the Viscount de Vandenesse, "your efforts to pay your creditors have accidentally come to the knowledge of the king. His Majesty, touched by an act so rare, and knowing that, from humility, you do not wear the cross of the Legion of Honor, has sent me to request you to resume the emblem.

Desirous, also, to aid you to fulfill your obligations, he has commissioned me to hand you this sum, taken from his privy purse, regretting that he cannot do more. Let this remain a profound secret. His Majesty considers the official promulgation of his charities unworthy of a king," added the private secretary, placing six thousand francs in the hands of the clerk, whose sensations during this speech had been indescribable.

Birotteau stammered forth a few unconnected words, and Vandenesse, smiling, bade him farewell with a gesture of his hand. The sentiment which animated poor César is so rare in Paris, that his conduct had gradually excited admiration. Joseph Lebas, Judge Popinot, Camusot, the abbé Loraux, Ragon, the head of the important house which employed Césarine, Lourdois, la Billardière, had spoken of it. Public opinion, already changed concerning him, praised him to the skies.

"There's a man of honor for you!" This exclamation had several times struck César's ear as he passed along the street, and caused him the emotion which an author feels as he hears the words, "There he is!" This honorable fame was mortally hateful to du Tillet. When César received the bills sent him by the sovereign, his first thought was to employ them in paying his former clerk. The poor man went to the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, and the banker, returning from his business, met his former master on the staircase.

"Well, my poor Birotteau!" said he, in patronizing tones.

"Poor," cried the debtor, proudly, "I am very rich. I shall lay my head upon my pillow to-night with the satisfaction of knowing that I have paid you."

This speech, so pregnant with integrity, was a sharp torture for du Tillet. In spite of the public esteem, he

did not esteem himself ; a voice within that he could not stifle, cried out to him, "This man is sublime !"

"Pay me ! Why, what business are you in ?"

Very sure that du Tillet would not divulge the secret, the ex-perfumer said : "I never shall resume business, sir. No human power could have foreseen what has happened. Who knows that I should not be the victim of another Roguin ? But my conduct has been laid before the king, his heart has deigned to have pity on my efforts, and he has encouraged me by sending me, just now, quite a considerable sum which—"

"Do you want a receipt ?" said du Tillet, interrupting him, "do you pay in—"

"In full, and the interest, too ; so I beg you to come with me to Monsieur Crottat's, two steps from here."

"What, before a notary !"

"Sir," said César, "I am not interdicted from aspiring to rehabilitation, and papers, duly witnessed, are, in that case, evidence beyond suspicion."

"Well, then," said du Tillet, who went out with Birotteau, "come, it's only a step. But where do you find so much money," he resumed.

"I don't find it, I earn it by the sweat of my brow."

"You owe an enormous sum to the house of Claparon."

"Alas, yes, that is my heaviest debt. I am almost afraid I shall die at the task."

"You will never pay it," said du Tillet, harshly.

"He is right," thought Birotteau.

The poor man went unwittingly through the Rue Saint Honoré on his way home ; he usually went round about so as not to see his shop nor the windows of his rooms. For the first time since his fall, he saw the house in

which eighteen years of happiness had been blotted out by three months of anguish.

"I thought I should end my days there," he said.

And he hurried on, for he had caught a glimpse of the new sign :

CÉLESTIN CREVEL,

SUCCESSOR TO CÉSAR BIROTTEAU.

"What's the matter with my eyes? Wasn't that Césarine?" he cried, as he remembered having seen a blonde head at the window.

He had really seen his wife, his daughter and Popinot. The lovers knew that César never passed before his former house. Having no reason to foresee what now happened, they had come to made arrangements relative to the entertainment which they were planning for César. This singular apparition so astonished Birotteau that he remained stock still.

"There is Monsieur Birotteau looking at his old house," said Molineux to the shopkeeper living opposite the Queen of Roses.

"Poor man," said the perfumer's late neighbor, "he gave a splendid ball, sir, in that house. There were two hundred carriages."

"I was there; he failed three months afterwards," said Molineux. "I was syndic."

Birotteau hurried away with trembling limbs, and went to his uncle Pillerault's.

Pillerault, aware of what was going on in the Rue des Cinq Diamants, thought that the shock of a joy so great as that resulting from his rehabilitation, would be too much for his nephew, for he was the daily witness of the moral vicissitudes of the poor man, whose inflexible

opinions relative to failure were ever before him, and whose strength was well-nigh overtasked. Honor was to César a corpse which might yet have its Easter. This hope rendered his agony unceasingly active. Pillerault took it upon himself to prepare him to hear the glad tidings. When Birotteau returned home, he found his uncle thinking of the best method of accomplishing his purpose. The delight with which the clerk narrated the evidence of the interest the king felt in him seemed auspicious to Pillerault, and his astonishment at having seen Césarine at the Queen of Roses furnished an excellent pretext for opening the subject.

"Well, César," said Pillerault, "do you know what has led to this? Popinot's impatience to marry Césarine. He can't wait any longer, and he is not bound, for the sake of your exaggerated notions of probity, to waste his youth and to eat dry bread while smelling a good dinner. Popinot wishes to give you the funds necessary for the payment of your creditors in full."

"That would be buying his wife," said Birotteau.

"Is it not honorable to rehabilitate one's father-in-law?"

"But it might be contested. Besides—"

"Besides," said Pillerault, pretending to be angry, "you perhaps have the right to sacrifice yourself, but you have not the right to sacrifice your daughter."

Upon this a lively discussion commenced, and Pillerault purposely fanned the flame.

"Suppose, then, that Popinot lent you nothing at all," cried Pillerault, "suppose he had considered you his partner, and the sum given your creditors for your share of the oil a mere advance upon the profits, so as not to despoil you—"

"It would look as if I had connived with him to cheat my creditors."

Pillerault pretended to be overcome by this argument. He was sufficiently acquainted with the human heart to know that the worthy creature would have a quarrel with himself on this point during the night; and this internal discussion would accustom him to the idea of his rehabilitation.

"But why," said César at dinner, "why were my wife and daughter at my former house?"

"Anselme wishes to hire it and live there with Césarine. Your wife shares his opinions. Without letting you know it, they have had the banns published, so as to force you to consent. Popinot says there would be less merit in marrying Césarine after your rehabilitation. What! You take six thousand francs from the king, and you'll take nothing from your relatives! I suppose I can give you a receipt for what you owe me, can't I?"

"I would not refuse to take it, but it would not prevent me from economizing in order to pay you, spite of the receipt."

"What subtelty!" said Pillerault. "In matters relating to integrity I ought to be trusted. What a stupid reply you made just now. Will you have cheated your creditors when you have paid them all you owe?"

At this moment, César looked at Pillerault, and Pillerault was moved to see a frank smile animate, for the first time in three years, his poor nephew's dejected features.

"It's true," he said, "they would be paid; but it would be selling my daughter."

"Well, I want to be bought," said Césarine, who entered with Popinot.

The two lovers had heard César's last words as they came on tiptoe into the ante-chamber of their uncle's little suite of rooms, Madame Birotteau following them. They had all three been in a carriage to see the creditors who were still to be paid, and had convoked them for that evening at Alexander Crottat's, where the receipts would be in readiness. The loving Popinot's powerful logic triumphed over César's scruples, though the latter at first insisted upon calling himself a debtor, and upon asserting that he evaded the law by a mere substitution of one creditor for another. But the refinements of his conscience were vanquished by Popinot's exclamation, "Do you want to kill your daughter?"

"Kill my daughter!" said César, alarmed.

"Well, then," said Popinot, "I have the right to make you a donation of the sum which I conscientiously believe to be yours. Do you refuse?"

"No," said César.

"Very well, we will go to Alexander Crottat's this evening, so as not to have to recur to the subject again, and we will arrange about the marriage contract at the same time."

An application for rehabilitation and the necessary papers to support it were deposited by Derville with the attorney-general of the Royal Court of Paris. During the month that these formalities and the publication of the banns for Anselme and Césarine's marriage lasted, Birotteau was in a constant state of feverish agitation. He was very anxious, and was afraid he should not live till the great day when the decree should be pronounced. His heart palpitated without any reason, he said. He complained of dull pains in that organ, which was as much worn by the emotions of pain as it was fatigued by this supreme delight. Decrees of rehabilita-

tion are so rare in the jurisdiction of the Royal Court of Paris that hardly one is rendered in ten years. To persons who look upon society in a serious point of view, the machinery of justice presents a grand and imposing spectacle. Institutions depend altogether upon the sentiments with which men regard them, and upon the grandeur with which they are clothed by the mind. Thus, when a nation no longer preserves, we do not say its religion, but its faith, when primary education has loosened every conservative tie by accustoming the child to a pitiless analysis, the nation is dissolved, for it is no longer a body except so far as it is ignobly held together by the ties of material interest and the commandments of the worship created by a profound selfishness.

Birotteau, who had been religiously educated, accepted the administration of justice for what it ought to be in the eyes of man—the representative of society itself, an august expression of the accepted law independent of the form under which it is manifested; the older, the more broken-down and gray-headed the magistrate, the more solemn the exercise of his sacred office, which demands so profound a study of men and things, which sacrifices the heart and hardens it to the guardianship of interests so vital. Men who cannot ascend the stairs of the Royal Court in the Old Temple of Justice in Paris without lively emotion are becoming rare, and the late tradesman was one of those men. Few persons have noticed the imposing majesty of this staircase, and its admirable position for producing an effect. It stands above the exterior peristyle which adorns the court-yard of the palace, and its gate is in the middle of a gallery which leads, in one direction, to the immense lobby, and in the other, to the Holy Chapel—two mon-

uments well calculated to render every thing mean about them.

The church of St. Louis is one of the most imposing edifices in Paris, and its appearance at the end of this gallery is singularly sombre and romantic. The grand lobby, on the contrary, presents a light and brilliant expanse, and it is difficult to forget that the history of France is connected with this room. This staircase must therefore be of a remarkably grand character, as it is not unduly crushed by these two magnificent works. Perhaps the soul is moved at sight of the spot where the decrees of justice are executed, seen through the rich railing of the palace. The stairs lead to an immense hall, the ante-room of that in which the court holds the audience of its first chamber, and which forms the lobby of this court. The reader can judge what the emotions of the bankrupt were, impressed as he naturally would be by these accessories, on ascending to the court, surrounded by his friends ; Lebas, at this time president of the tribunal of commerce ; Camusot, lately his commissary-judge ; Ragon, once his employer ; and the abbé Loraux, his spiritual director. The holy priest brought out in full relief these human splendors by a reflection which rendered them still more imposing in César's eyes. Pillerault, like a practical philosopher as he was, had conceived the idea of exciting the joy of his nephew in a high degree beforehand, in order to remove any danger likely to result from unforeseen events during the ceremony. As the ex-tradesman was finishing his toilet, his true friends, who made it a point of honor to accompany him to the bar of the court, arrived. This escort produced in César's mind a satisfaction which threw him into just the state of excitement necessary to enable him to support the imposing spec-

tacle. Birotteau found other friends assembled in the hall of solemn conclave, where a dozen counselors had taken their seats.

After the cases in readiness had been called, Birotteau's attorney made his application in a few words. The first president having motioned the attorney-general to state his views, that officer rose. In the name of the prosecution, the attorney-general, the functionary representing the justice of the people, said he had been on the point of claiming the privilege himself, of restoring this tradesman his honor which he had done nothing more than compromise—a unique ceremony, for he who is condemned can only be pardoned. Persons of sensibility will imagine Birotteau's emotions when he heard Monsieur de Grandville utter a discourse of which the following is an abridgement:

"Gentlemen," said the celebrated magistrate, "on the 16th of January, 1820, Birotteau was declared a bankrupt, by decision of the tribunal of commerce of the Seine. His failure was occasioned neither by the tradesman's imprudence, nor by improper speculations, nor by any reason that could injure his reputation. We feel it incumbent upon us to say thus publicly, that this misfortune was due to one of those calamities which have occurred, more than once, to the great shame of justice and of the city of Paris. It was reserved to an age, in which the dangerous leaven of revolutionary manners and ideas must yet a long time ferment, to witness the notariat of Paris abandoning the glorious traditions of preceding ages, and causing, in the space of a few years, as many failures as occurred during two centuries under the old monarchy. The thirst for money and for its rapid acquisition has seized

upon these public officers, these guardians of the public wealth, these intermediate magistrates.'

A tirade followed upon this text, in which, falling in with the necessities of his position, the Count de Grandville found means to criminate the liberals, the Bonapartists and other enemies of the throne. The event has proved that he was justified in his apprehensions.

"The flight of a notary of Paris, who carried away the funds deposited with him by Birotteau, caused the ruin of the postulant," he resumed. "The court rendered in the matter a decision which shows to what a degree the confidence of Roguin's clients had been abused. An arrangement followed. We will remark, to the postulant's credit, that the transactions were remarkable for their uprightness, a feature never characterizing the scandalous failures by which trade in Paris is daily disgraced. Birotteau's creditors found the smallest articles that the unfortunate man possessed. They found, gentlemen, his clothing, his jewels, in short, all the articles intended exclusively for personal use, and not only his, but those of his wife, who waived her rights in order to increase the assets. Birotteau was worthy, in this emergency, of the consideration to which he had owed his municipal functions; for he was at that time deputy mayor of the second ward, and had just received the cross of the Legion of Honor, given as much to the devoted royalist who fought in Vendémiaire upon the steps of St. Roch, which he had dyed with his blood, as to the consular judge, esteemed for his intelligence and beloved for his conciliating spirit, and to the modest official who refused the honors of the mayorality, at the same time pointing out a man more worthy of it, the honorable Baron de la Billardière, one of the noble

Vendeans whom he had learned to respect in a period of trouble."

"That's a better phrase than mine," said César in his uncle's ear.

"Thus, the creditors, receiving sixty per cent. of their claims through the abandonment, by this honest tradesman, his wife and daughter, of all that they possessed, strongly expressed their esteem in the arrangement made between the debtor and themselves, in which they relinquished all further claims against him. The evidence they thus bear commends itself to the court by the language in which it is expressed."

Here the attorney-general read the paragraphs of the arrangement commencing "whereas."

"Many tradesmen, gentlemen, in view of this easy disposition of his creditors, would have considered themselves liberated, and would have walked the streets with conscious pride. Not so Birotteau. Without being disheartened, he formed in his mind the project to live for the glorious day which has now dawned upon him. Nothing has discouraged him. Our well-beloved sovereign gives the veteran of St. Roch an office that he may earn his bread, the bankrupt puts aside his salary for his creditors, reserving nothing for his own needs, for the devotion of a family was not withheld from him."

Birotteau pressed his uncle's hand and wept.

"His wife and daughter contributed the result of their labor to the common fund, for they had made the noble purpose of Birotteau their own. Both of them descended from the position they occupied to assume an inferior one. These sacrifices, gentlemen, deserve the highest honor, for they are the most difficult to make. The task which Birotteau had imposed upon himself is as follows;"

Here the attorney-general read the result of the arrangement made, mentioning the sums remaining due and the names of the creditors.

"All these sums, gentlemen, interest included, have been paid ; the receipts are not private signatures which call for the severe investigation the law requires, but receipts legally witnessed, and which, though they could not deceive the court, have nevertheless been fully examined by the proper magistrates. You will restore Birotteau, not his honor, but the rights of which he has been deprived, and you will do justice. Such spectacles are so rare before you, that we cannot help expressing to the postulant our approval of a line of conduct which an august favor had already encouraged." He then read his formal conclusions, drawn up in legal form.

The court consulted together without leaving their seats, and the president rose to pronounce their decision. "The court," he said in closing, "directs me to express to Birotteau its pleasure in returning such a verdict. Clerk, call on the next case."

Birotteau, already decked in the robe of honor in which the speech of the attorney-general had clad him, was well-nigh overcome with pleasure at having this solemn sentence uttered by the first president of the first Royal Court of France,—one which proved that even the impassible hearts of the officers of human justice could sometimes vibrate. He could not leave his place at the bar ; one would have thought him nailed there, as he gazed vacantly upon the magistrates as upon angels who had opened him the gates of social life again. His uncle took him by the hand and drew him out into the hall. César, who had not obeyed Louis XVIII, mechanically attached the ribbon of the Legion to his button-hole,

was immediately surrounded by his friends and carried in triumph to the carriage.

"Where are you taking me to, my friends?" he said to Joseph Lebas, Pillerault and Ragon.

"To your own house."

"No, it is three o'clock; I want to go to the Exchange, and profit by my right."

"Drive to the Exchange," said Pillerault to the coachman, looking significantly at Lebas, for he observed certain threatening symptoms in the rehabilitated tradesman, and he feared that he might go mad.

The late perfumer entered the Exchange, giving one arm to his uncle and the other to Lebas, both of them tradesmen highly respected. His rehabilitation was known. The first person who saw the three traders, and old Ragon following them, was du Tillet.

"Ah, my dear master, I am delighted to hear that you are out of your difficulties. I perhaps contributed to this happy conclusion of your troubles by the ease with which I let little Popinot pluck out one of my wing feathers. I am as pleased with your happiness as if it were my own."

"You couldn't be pleased with it any other way," said Pillerault, "for it will never happen to you."

"In what sense do you mean, sir?" said du Tillet.

"In the complimentary sense, of course," put in Lebas, smiling at the malicious retort of Pillerault, who regarded du Tillet as a scoundrel, though he knew nothing against him.

Matifat recognized César. Immediately merchants of the highest reputation surrounded the ex-perfumer and gave him an ovation after the manner of the Exchange; he received the most flattering speeches, grasps of the hand which excited no little jealousy and even caused

considerable remorse, for out of a hundred persons who were walking there, more than fifty had liquidated. Gigonnet and Gobseck, who were conversing in a corner, looked at the honest perfumer as probably naturalists looked at the first electric eel that was laid before them. This fish, possessing the power of a Leyden jar, is the greatest curiosity of the animal kingdom. After having inhaled the incense of his triumph, César got into his carriage again and started to return to his house, where the marriage contract between his dear Césarine and the devoted Popinot was to be signed.

One fault of youth is the error of believing every one as strong as itself—a fault, however, resulting from its good qualities; instead of seeing men and things through the spectacles of age, it colors them with the reflections of its own fire, and endows old people with its superabundance of vitality. Like César and Constance, Popinot preserved in his memory a superb picture of Birotteau's ball. During these three years of trial, Constance and César had often heard, though they never said so, Collinet's orchestra, often seen the blooming assemblage of guests, and often tasted again the bliss which had been so cruelly punished, as Adam and Eve must often have thought of that forbidden fruit which gave death and life to all their posterity, for it appears that the reproduction of angels is one of the mysteries of heaven. Popinot, however, could think of the ball without remorse and with delight; Césarine, in all her glory, had promised herself to him in his poverty. During that evening he had acquired the certainty of being loved for himself alone! So, when he had bought back from Célestin the lease of the rooms which Grindot had decorated, with the stipulation that nothing should be touched, when he had scrupulously

preserved the smallest articles belonging to César and Constance, it was his dream, his desire, to give a ball there, his wedding-ball. He had prepared this festivity with ardor, imitating his master in his necessary expenses only and not in his follies ; the follies were already committed. The dinner was to be served by Chevet, the guests were nearly the same. The abbé Loraux came in the place of the grand chancellor of the Legion of Honor ; Lebas, the president of the Tribunal of Commerce, was of course present. Popinot invited Monsieur Camusot as a return for the kindness he had so lavishly shown Birotteau. De Vandenesse and de Fontaine came instead of Roguin and his wife.

Césarine and Popinot had distributed the invitations for the ball with discernment. Both of them shrank from the publicity of a wedding, and had avoided the danger of wounding the susceptibilities that the innocent and pure feel on such occasions, by giving the ball on the signing of the contract instead of on the solemnization of the ceremony. Constance had resumed the cherry-colored gown in which, during one single day, she had shone with such fleeting glory. Césarine had taken pleasure in surprising Popinot by appearing in the ball-dress of which he had again and again spoken. In the same way the rooms were to present to Birotteau the enchanting spectacle which he had enjoyed during a single evening. Neither Constance, nor Césarine, nor Anselme, had supposed there could be any danger for César in this huge surprise, and at four o'clock they were waiting for him with a delight which almost made them childish.

After the ineffable emotions which his visit to the Exchange had just caused him, this hero of commercial integrity was to meet the shock which awaited him in

the Rue Saint Honoré. When he entered his former home, and saw, at the foot of the still fresh staircase, his wife in her cherry-colored gown, Césarine, the Count de Fontaine, the Viscount de Vandenesse, the Baron de la Billardière, the illustrious Vauquelin, a light veil seemed spread before his eyes, and his uncle Pillerault, who supported him on his arm, noticed an internal shudder.

"This is too much," said the philosopher to the lover, "he never can drink the cup which you have filled for him."

Delight was so profound in every heart, that all attributed César's emotion and his hesitating gait to an intoxication which, though perfectly natural, is often fatal. As he found himself at home again, as he saw his parlor and the guests, among whom were several ladies dressed for the ball, the heroic movement of the finale of Beethoven's grand symphony suddenly burst forth in his head and in his heart. This ideal music flashed and pealed in the major and in the minor, and sounded its trumpets in the membranes of this worn-out brain, for which it was to be indeed the grand finale.

Overwhelmed by this internal harmony, he took his wife's arm and whispered in a voice choked by a rush of blood till now restrained: "I am not well!"

Constance, alarmed, led her husband to his chamber, which he with difficulty reached, and where he dropped into his arm-chair, saying: "Monsieur Haudry, Monsieur Loraux!"

The abbé Loraux came, followed by the guests and ladies in ball dress, who stopped short, forming a terrified group. In the presence of this gay assembly, César pressed the hand of his confessor, and bowed his head

upon the bosom of his kneeling wife. A blood-vessel had already burst in his chest, and, to crown all, an aneurism stifled his last breath.

"Behold the death of the just," said the abbé Loraux, in a deep voice, as he pointed to César with one of those divine gestures that Rembrandt was inspired to draw in his picture of the Raising of Lazarus.

Christ has ordered the earth to give up its dead, and the holy man of God pointed out to heaven this martyr of mercantile probity, that he might be crowned with the everlasting palm.

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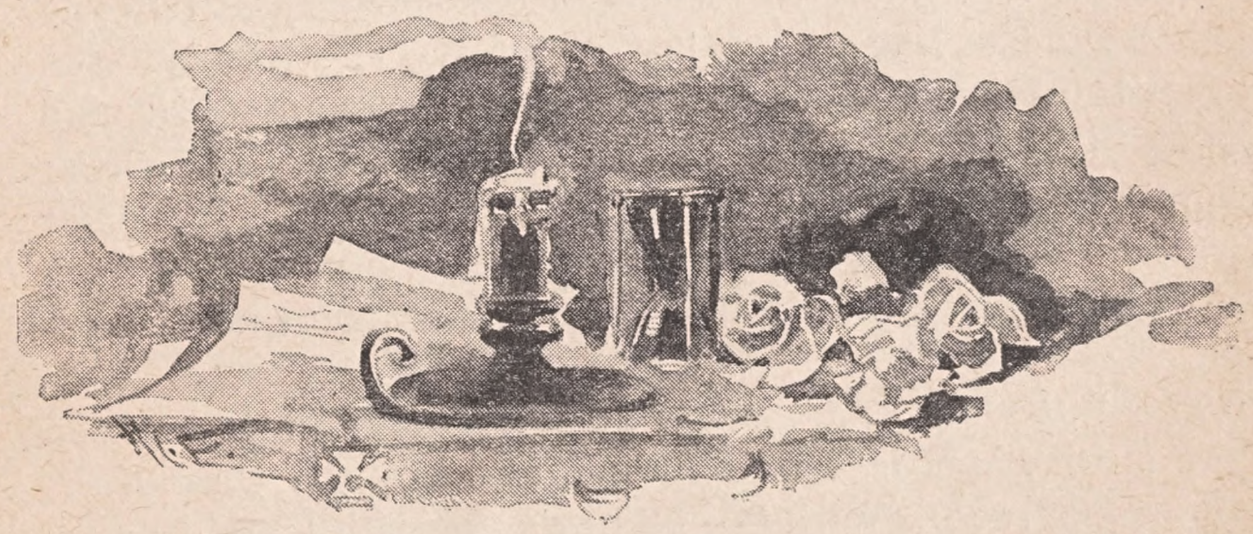

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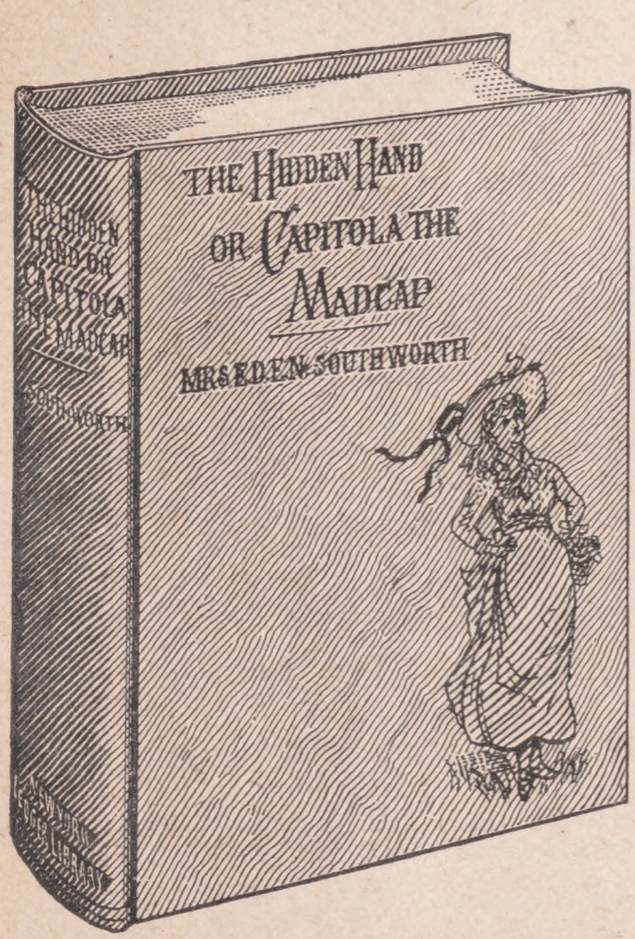

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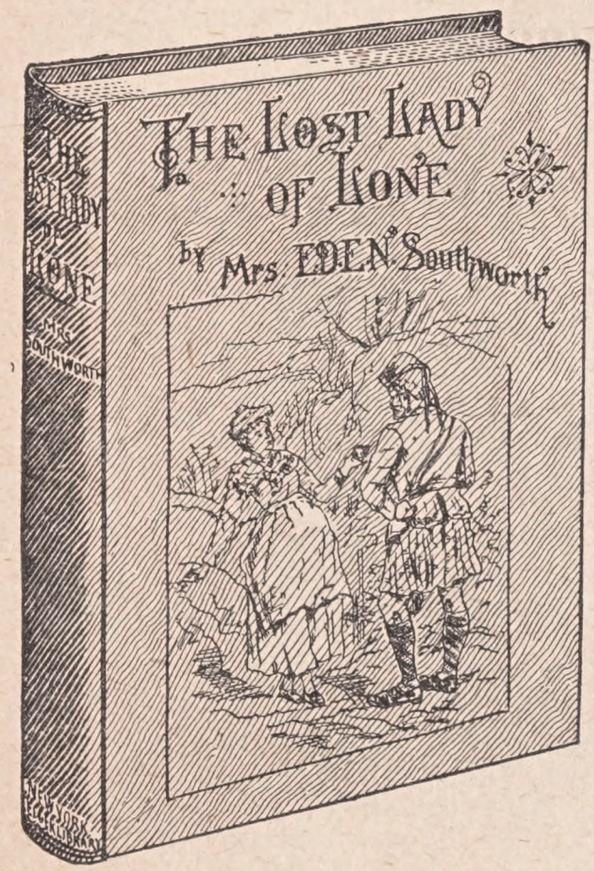

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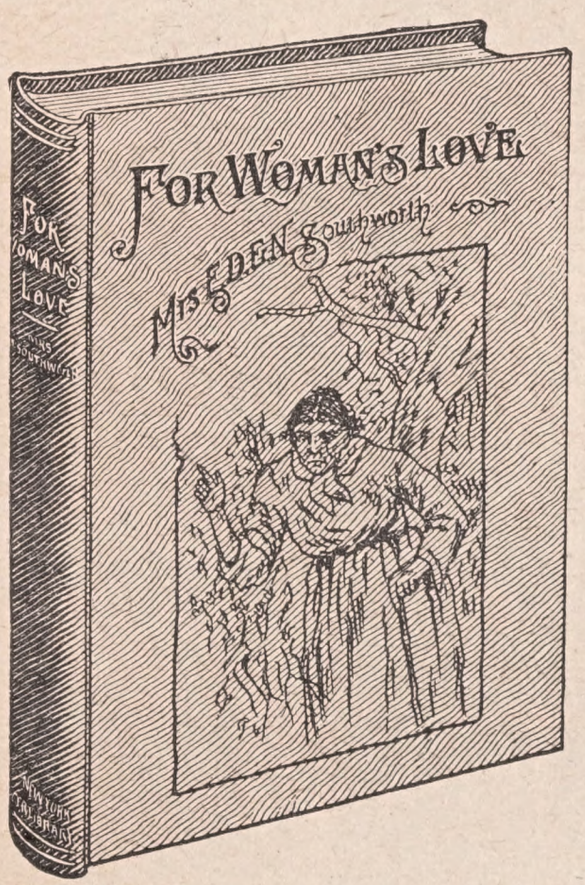

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